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TEMPTATION;

OR,

THE UNKNOWN HEIRESS.

No. 2 LAFAYETTE AVENUE
BROOKLYN, L. I.

BY

J. FREDERICK SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "STANFIELD HALL," "AMY LAWRENCE," "MINNIE GREY," "GUS HOWARD," "WOMAN AND HER MASTER," "FRED VERNON," "VIRGIN QUEEN," "ROCHESTER; OR, THE MERRY DAYS OF ENGLAND," ETC., ETC.

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BROOKLYN, L. I.

TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER I.

To stand or fall.
Free in thine own arbitrant it stands—
Perfect within, no outward aid require;
And all temptation to transgress repel
MILTON.

FARNSFIELD, on the borders of Nottinghamshire, is one of the few remaining villages in England where the stocks and Maypole—those all but obsolete relics of bygone times—may still be found standing in primeval dignity. The former, we are happy to say, were gradually falling into disuse at the time our tale commences, much to the regret of one Michael Tippin—generally called Old Mike—the grey-haired beadle, sexton, and constable of the village: three single gentlemen rolled into one.

Frequently had Mike, when party politics ran high in Farnsfield, or the boys were more than usually unruly, been heard emphatically to declare that the country would never be safe from the French and revolution, until the stocks were brought into general use again. In his opinion, they were the only panacea for the growing corruption of the times. What would the old man say were he living now?

The palladium of Minerva's favored city we are told fell from heaven—that of Farnsfield came from the hands of the carpenter; but its champion esteemed it none the less on that account—perhaps the more; for it was a labor of love with him to patch, paint, and keep the ricketty, decaying machine in repair, in the hope that justice would one day see the error of its ways, and once more bring it into use.

The fifth of November—when the lads went about collecting old barrels, gate-posts, hurdles—in short, everything they could lay their hands upon as contributions to the bonfire on the green—was a day of sore trial and tribulation to the sexton, who watched over the safety of the stocks with all the vigilance of a jealous lover. More than once had the dignity of his staff and laced hat been perilled by a contest with the youthful marauders.

The Maypole, on the contrary, required no such protection on the recurrence of this and other dreaded anniversaries; it was guarded alike by the recollections of the old and the love of the young—who, on the first of the floral month, and during the three days of the village feast—which took place in autumn—were accustomed to assemble round it.

Many a love-tale had been breathed in its vicinity in the ears of blushing girls, who were now thoughtful, steady mothers; and many a pang of jealousy rent the heart of some rustic swain at the sight of a rival guiding the footsteps of the village belle through the mazes of the May-day dance.

Even the children loved the Maypole. They looked forward to the future; and Farnsfield—pretty, rural, hospitable Farnsfield—would not have been Farnsfield without it. Michael Tippin—for the future, following the example of his neighbors, we shall use the familiar abbreviation of Mike—was a hale, hearty man, apparently about sixty, or at the most, sixty-three years of age. Time had dealt gently with him. His tall, spare form, was still vigorous and erect as ever; his thoughtful grey eye clear, but not without a certain expression of cunning—perhaps shrewdness would have been a better word—when he turned its inquiring glance upon any one; a few thickly-curling locks, as white as snow, covered the back of his head, and gave a venerable appearance to his healthy, sunburnt features. Had Mike's countenance only been paler, he might have served as an excellent model to some artist for a saint.

At the close of a fine evening on the first day of September, 1800, Mike, having nothing else to occupy his time with, had repaired to the little green in the front of the

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church—a glorious specimen of the Tudor style—and was amusing himself with repairing his old friend, the stocks, which stood on a little mound close to the wall of the churchyard.

The flood of sunset, deluging the green with gold and purple hues, was broken only by the mass of dark shadow which the sacred edifice cast upon the sward, enveloping the workman, stocks and all, in its shade.

The old man had been occupied more than an hour—for the repair was an important one—when his attention to his voluntary labor was called off by the dull, though quick sound, of a horseman cantering over the sun-scorched turf towards him. Mike looked up, and saw that the rider was a stranger—for he knew every face—man's, woman's, and child's—not only in the village of Farnsfield, but the neighborhood.

"Some visitor," he muttered, "to the hall; and yet it is singular they should receive company at such a time—the young squire, they say, on his death bed! Not that Sir Richard is likely to grieve much at the loss of his first-born—he never loved him! So young—so good, rich, and frank-hearted! Poor gentleman! it is a sad thing to quit a world which promises so much—and just of age, too! Ah! let me see; the first of September—*of age this very day!*"

By this time the horseman—who had checked his steed and remained for some time gazing around him like one uncertain of his road—perceived the speaker, and, giving the animal the rein, cantered towards him.

"A soldier!" added Mike, as he drew near.

It required no great penetration to make the discovery: so decided was the military bearing of the rider, that not even the plain, unlaced, snuff-colored suit he wore could disguise it.

His age might be about thirty—certainly not less; his features were regular and handsome, and his eyes the same color as his hair—which he wore without powder—a dark brown.

"Is this Farnsfield, my good fellow?" he said, addressing the sexton, who had risen from his knees, and stood, with one hand on the post of the stocks, gazing at him.

"It is, sir!" replied the old man; "you might trust the horse you ride to bring you the darkest night in December, to the village post-office—he knows no other road; he has trotted every day for the last seven years, to my certain knowledge, between Newark and Farnsfield with the letter-bags."

The gentleman seemed slightly annoyed; perhaps he did not wish the direction he had come from to be known.

"It seems a pleasant place," he observed.

"It *was* a pleasant place, sir," answered Mike, the wrinkles on his broad, ample forehead, becoming suddenly deeper, "in Justice Oldcastle's time! He was not to be led away by new-fangled notions about the stocks hardening people, and such nonsense! I've had as many as five a week in them when he was alive."

The stranger smiled.

"Perhaps, sir," continued the speaker, "you approve of these new fashions?"

"Indeed I do not!" replied the horseman, hastily—for he was sufficiently a man of the world to perceive that he would get little information out of the old man, who was evidently a character, if he ventured to disagree with him; "on the contrary, I have been subjected to a firm discipline the greater part of my life, and I approve of it."

No doubt this was not uttered without certain mental reservations; but, as we before observed, the gentleman had his reasons for not displeasing the sexton.

"By-the-bye," he added, "what monument is that?"

He pointed to a species of cenotaph, towering to a considerable height above the wall of the churchyard, and evidently, from its construction, of much older date than the church; it was not much unlike one of those picturesque crosses formerly so common in England, erected in Catholic times to commemorate particular events. There was this difference, however—that three of the arches were walled up with blocks of granite so as to form a species of vault, the fourth being occupied by massive iron doors, on either side of which was the statue of a knight in the armor of the twelfth century; each effigy had a shield, on which were sculptured three martlets and a fleur-de-lis.

"Well, *that* is a singular monument," observed the old man complacently; "and I am glad that you noticed it; it belongs also to as singular a family; Sir Richard Trevanian, one of the old standards in these parts."

"Is that the burial-place of the Trevanians?" demanded the traveller, with a sigh.

"Even so," continued the sexton; "and by all accounts it is soon likely to be opened again—for the eldest son, Squire Edward, they say is dying. A good gentleman!" added the speaker, emphatically; "a good gentleman! and the poor will have cause to lament for him, go when he will! Perhaps you are acquainted with the family, sir?"

"No," replied the stranger, after a pause; "I never met but one of the name in my life."

Mike looked at him doubtfully.

"And that," added the speaker, "was far from here."

"Perhaps in foreign parts, sir?"

"This place interests me!" resumed the horseman, avoiding an answer to the question; "I had heard there are several curious old mansions in the neighborhood, and made up my mind to remain here for a day or two. My host at Newark recommended the Trevanian Arms; perhaps you will direct me to it?"

"The Trevanian Arms!" repeated Mike, with astonishment; "why, it is no better than an ale-house!"

"No matter."

"So solitary too."

"I shall like it all the better," observed the gentleman, impatiently; "and now, my friend, as I have given you some trouble, and delayed you at your work, if you will point out my road, I shall be happy to recompense you."

He took from his waistcoat pocket a seven shilling piece—there were seven shilling pieces in those days—and held it temptingly between his finger and thumb. Mike eyed the coin wistfully; he would fain have asked one or two more questions, but the fear of losing it prevented him.

"Keep the side of the wood, sir," he said, "till you come to Newstead Road, then turn sharp off to the right; you can't mistake the house—it is directly opposite the great entrance to the park. Betsy Guyton, who keeps it, was formerly nurse at the hall, and ——"

The military-looking personage, without waiting to hear the conclusion of the sexton's observation, thanked him for his information, and trotted off in the direction he had pointed out, but not before he had dropped into the old man's hand the coin he had so lately held in his own.

"A strange guest for Bet Guyton!" he muttered, looking first at the seven shilling-piece and then after the rider; "but it is no affair of mine! Why should I trouble my head with it?"

With this philosophical reflection, he resumed his work; but had not continued it long before he was interrupted by a second traveller—a short, but very gentlemanly looking man, mounted upon an iron grey cob—a quiet, cosy, easy-going animal, fit to carry a bishop, or at the very least, a dean.

Mike touched the scanty tuft of white hair upon his forehead: he felt instinctively that the new comer was one of the cloth.

"Can you direct me, my good friend," inquired the gentleman, "to a little inn, somewhere in this neighborhood, called the *Trevanian Arms?*"

"Where?" demanded the sexton, with a stare of surprise.

"The Trevanian Arms!" mildly repeated the inquirer.

Mike repeated the instructions he had given to his first visitor.

"Thank you, friend!" said the stranger, at the same time throwing him a crown-piece.

"Do you reside hereabouts?"

"I am the sexton and beadle of Farnsfield!"

"Sexton! Beadle! Ha—very good!" slowly enunciated the querist, complacently. "Humph! very fine church!"

"It is a fine old place!" said Mike.

"The living good?"

"More than a thousand a year, sir!"

The gentleman appeared to regard the sacred edifice with redoubled interest, and next inquired whether the incumbent had the great tithes as well as the small.

"No—no!" replied the parish officer, "they belong to the chapter at Southwell!"

"He be a parson!" exclaimed the old man, as the second traveller ambled off in the direction he had pointed out. "I'd bet the crown-piece—and, for the matter of that, the seven-shilling one, too—that he be a parson—it wor so natural loike. The first asked about the monuments and the statues of the old knights—he wor a soldier; the second wor only anxious after the tithes and living of the parish. Every one to his trade."

Either the shadows of night, which were rapidly drawing around, or the sudden and unaccountable thirst which had seized the speaker from the moment he became possessed of the money, rendered it impossible for him to pursue his work any longer; he began, therefore, to pack up his tools, in order to remove them to the lower chamber of the belfry, which he called his den.

Just as he had concluded, and was locking the gate of the churchyard, strange to relate, a *third* traveller, driving a powerful roan horse in a light gig, came rattling over the green. At the sight of the sexton, he, too, paused.

"What can *he* want?" mentally ejaculated the old man, a superstitious feeling creeping over him.

"Which is the nearest road to the Trevanian Arms?" demanded the new comer.

The keys rattled so in Mike's hand that he could not fasten the gate.

"Did you hear me, friend?" said the stranger, impatiently.

"Yes—I—I did hear you!" faltered Mike, at last. "The Trevanian Arms—it is a poor place for a gentleman like you to put up at."

"Perhaps it is cheap, and will suit my

means," replied the man in the gig; "or business or pleasure may take me there; no matter what my motive, since it cannot affect you. Guide me as I request, and I will pay you for your trouble."

The cheerful, business-like tone in which the words were uttered, convinced the sexton that the speaker at least was mortal, like himself, so he gave him the same direction which he had given his predecessor; and in return the gentleman threw him a shilling, as he drove off towards the wood.

Mike reflected for some time, as he stood turning the shilling over in his hand. Never in the course of his long career had he been so puzzled.

"A man of the world, that!" he said, as he dropped the coin at last into his capacious pocket; "most likely a lawyer, for they know the *valley* of money, and don't throw it away. The soldier gave I seven shillings. Ah, light come, light go! The parson five; it might have been less, if I hadn't told un I belonged to the church; and the lawyer, if he be a lawyer, a shilling! Hang me," he added, with a burst of curiosity, "if I wouldn't give all to know what takes soldier, parson, and lawyer, to Bet Guyton's. No good, I fear, no good! Poor young Squire!"

So great was the desire of the Sexton to obtain some clue to the enigma, that he determined to visit the Trevanian Arms, despite the distance—no trifling obstacle at his age. Bet was an old acquaintance, and certain, as he thought, to make him welcome.

It is time that we proceeded to give some account of the family whose members, as our readers doubtless already have suspected, are destined to act no undistinguished parts in our tale.

Sir Richard Trevanian, when a very young man, had succeeded to the inheritance of an ancient name and a dilapidated estate. Being a prudent, calculating personage, he had married the only child and heiress of the gentleman who held the vast mortgages on his property—and so disembarrassed it. To do him justice, he made her a kind, if not affectionate husband. The lady died rather more than a year after her marriage, leaving him an infant heir. Upon this child and his issue—*male* or *female*—by the marriage setlements, the estate was strictly settled; and in the event of his dying without issue, it was left at his absolute disposal—his father retaining only a life-interest in it; the entail having been cut off by the preceding baronet—an act which his son bitterly regretted.

His year of widowhood having expired, *and Sir Richard having duly*

Borne about the mockery of wo
To midnight dances and the public show,

he became a second time a husband, giving his hand to Lady Olivia Beauchamp, who was shrewdly suspected of being the object of his first love.

Her ladyship was a proud, passionate, clever woman of the world, devotedly attached to Sir Richard and the son and daughter which in due time she bore him. They were her idols; in them she could see no faults; their very defects only rendered them more dear to her.

Not so with her step-son. If she did not absolutely hate him, he was indifferent to her; and the domestics, like well trained menials, took their cue from their new mistress.

Master Edward was always doing something wrong. His most trifling faults were duly reported to his father, who fancied that he was only doing his duty when he employed severity as a means, he said, of reclaiming him; till in time the boy began to tremble at the sound of his voice, to pine, and to avoid him.

There must be something radically wrong both in the conduct and heart of that father whose presence is a terror rather than a happiness to his child.

In the sixth year after his second marriage, Sir Richard was offered a diplomatic appointment at the court of Tuscany, which he accepted. The hall was let for a term of years to a General Maitland, and the baronet and his family, with the exception of his eldest son, departed for Italy. Edward was left behind, under the care of the Reverend Jabez Knowles—a clergyman at Southwell—with strict orders from the baronet to break his stubborn temper, if possible, and cure him of his evil ways.

The evil ways of a child! When will those on whom the holy duties of paternity devolve, comprehend that the key to the heart of youth is affection, not severity.

To do the Reverend Jabez Knowles justice, he carried out the instructions he had received and his own ideas of discipline to the very letter. The friendless boy must have turned out a prodigy of learning and virtue, if birching and impositions could have wrought so desirable a change; but somehow, despite the calculations of the pedagogue the more he birched the less tractable he became; and he began to entertain serious doubts of the possibility of ever flogging the evil spirit out of him.

His school companions—it is astonishing how quickly children catch the tone and feeling of those who have the charge of them—quickly perceived that Edward was no favorite with their master, and in turn tyrannised over him. Whenever he ap-

peared in the play-ground he was avoided, or sought only by his youthful tyrants to be made sport of; even the usher—a young Scotchman, who was sneaking his way into the church—invariably made Edward the scape-goat of the other pupils' offences; they could make him presents—the neglected heir of Sir Richard Trevanian had nothing to give.

On one occasion, after he had been severely punished for some act of mischief committed by one of the elder boys, his innocence was accidentally made clear.

"Why did you not say it was not you?" demanded the Reverend Jabez Knowles, angrily.

"I thought you knew it, sir!" answered the child, with unaffected simplicity.

The clerical brute blushed: for once the reproof stung him.

Edward had passed more than a year under the care of his tutor, and was gradually sinking into a state of sullen apathy, when a new pupil entered the school; this was the younger son of General Maitland, the tenant of Trevanian House during the absence of Sir Richard.

He was a fine, spirited lad, about fifteen years of age; generous—for he had ever been treated with affection; brave—for his spirit had not been broken by harsh and brutal treatment.

The first day he appeared upon the play-ground his new companions thronged around him; they were pleased with his frank manners and merry laugh; each felt anxious to court his acquaintance.

"I say, Maitland, who do you intend to fag?" inquired Tom Wall, the head boy, and, *par parenthese*, the greatest bully and coward of the school.

"Fag! no one!" was the reply.

"You must either fag or be fagged!" observed the former.

"Must I?" repeated the new comer. "I would advise any one who attempts to fag me to try first if he can thrash me—and even then it would be a question to be daily settled between us!"

Several of the younger boys who had gathered round them ventured to laugh.

"What are you grinning at, you young cur?" demanded Wall, walking up to Edward, who was standing by himself, near a large chesnut-tree, in the centre of the play-ground.

The poor little fellow looked at him as if he scarcely understood the question; there was something so preposterous in the idea of his smiling.

"Speak—can't you!" said the tyrant, seizing him by the hair, and knocking his head against the tree.

In an instant George Maitland sprang to his side, his eyes flashing with indignation.

"Let go your hold!" he said.

"I sha'n't!" replied the head boy of the school.

The new-comer, without a moment's hesitation, drew his guard, and struck his late companion a blow which sent him reeling on the ground; and then, without waiting to see whether the fallen bully would resent it or not, took Edward by the hand, and asked if he was hurt.

It was singular to witness the change that came over the sullen, apathetic features of the pale, sickly boy; his lips quivered for an instant, his dark eyes filled with tears—tears which the brutal treatment he had endured had long failed to draw from him. The words of kindness had touched his heart,—the seal upon the long-closed fountain was removed—he had found some one to love at last, and the waters of sensibility flowed freely.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed his defender, drawing him closely towards him; "why, he does not seem to have a friend amongst you!"

"He is a stupid bad fellow," observed several of the pupils, "and gets more floggings than all the boys in the school!"

"Does he?" muttered young Maitland, in a tone of sympathy.

"You will soon grow tired of defending him—every one hates him!"

"Do they?"

Edward looked in the face of his new friend imploringly, as if to say, "Do not you, too, hate me!"

The change which had taken place in the heart of young Trevanian was not the only remarkable circumstance of that important day: he suddenly found his courage—for when his old tormentor, Wall—who had recovered from his fall—approached, evidently with the intention of attacking Maitland, the hitherto meek and submissive child sprang towards him with the fury of a young lion, dealing him such desperate blows that the astonished tyrant staggered beneath them.

"He is mad!" shouted several of his school-fellows.

They were right: it was the madness of sensibility newly awakened.

Young as he was, it is not to be supposed that Edward could have contended for many minutes successfully against his old tormentor. Maitland soon came to his aid, observing that it was his quarrel, and no one else should settle it.

The result was, that the bully got exceedingly well thrashed, whilst his antagonist had scarcely a scar.

From that time George Maitland and Edward became friends; a brother's love

existed between them. If any of the boys of his own age insulted the latter, his champion stood by whilst they fought it out, and saw fair play between them: when one of the older lads was the assailant, he threw off his jacket and settled the quarrel for him. In less than a week a great moral revolution had taken place in the establishment of Mr. Jabez.

The progress of the hitherto dull boy in his studies was equally remarkable: his intelligence had been awakened—the shame of appearing stupid in the eyes of George, who was so clever and quick, was a strong incentive. He seldom missed a lesson; the pedagogue was surprised. He could not comprehend the change, and began to suspect that at last he had flogged his obstinacy out of him.

One morning, the reverend gentleman being in rather a more irritable temper than usual, heard a laugh in the class; and without waiting to ascertain the real culprit, *as a matter of course*, he turned round and struck Edward a violent blow.

"Shameful!" exclaimed young Maitland—"shameful!"

"Who dared utter that word?" demanded the master, turning very red in the face.

"I did!" said the generous boy, rising in his desk; "and I repeat it—shameful, brutal, and unjust! It was not Trevanian who laughed!"

"Who, then?"

"I am not a spy, to denounce a schoolfellow!" replied the youth.

"You shall do so, or take the punishment of the fault!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, now thoroughly excited by passion, and biting his thumbs—a peculiar habit with him when he had lost all command over his temper and reason.

The cane whizzed as it descended upon the shoulders of George Maitland, who endured it without flinching.

Not so Edward—he was pale with agony; his young heart rent at beholding the indignity offered to his friend. The poor boy sprang rather than walked from the class, and, throwing his arms around George, vainly endeavored to receive the blows upon his own tender limbs. Suddenly he uttered a deep groan and fainted.

The Rev. Mr. Jabez Knowles became alarmed; his passion left him in an instant. His means of existence depended upon his school.

"You have murdered him!" exclaimed George Maitland, shaking his clenched fist in the face of his tutor. "I will return home—Edward shall go with me! My father is a magistrate: he shall write to Sir *Richard Trevanian*, who cannot know what *a brute he has trusted his son to!*"

By this time Sneaking Tom—as the usher was generally called—had raised the senseless Edward in his arms: as he did so, two or three drops of blood trickled from the lips of the senseless boy.

"You shall not take him from me!" continued the speaker, clinging to the form of his friend. "See, boys," he added, "they have murdered him!"

There was a shudder, and a general cry of "Shame!" ran through the school.

The two lads were removed to their rooms, and Dr. Bennet, the surgeon, sent for.

When Edward recovered from his fainting fit, the first person he recognized was George, kneeling on the side of the bed close by him.

"For me!" sobbed the sufferer; "for me!"

Despite the skilful attempts of Mrs. Knowles—who, to do her justice, was inexpressibly shocked at the brutal conduct of her husband—to prevent him, George related everything which had occurred to the medical man—who, having turned down the collar of Edward's shirt, stood with his finger several minutes placed upon the artery just above the collar-bone.

"Of course it is nothing serious," observed the lady, anxiously.

Dr. Bennet made no reply, but silently prepared to bleed his patient. The operation performed, he gave strict orders that he should not be disturbed, but left for the rest of the day to repose.

"You hear, Master Maitland?" said Mrs. Knowles.

"I will not leave him," replied the boy, "unless I am forced away! My father will be here in a day or two—he will know how to act."

"You may remain," observed the surgeon, kindly, at the same time passing his hand approvingly over the head of the speaker. "In fact, he will be better with you by his side. You shall not be removed from your friend."

With this promise the brave, warm-hearted youth was content. As soon as they were alone, he sprang from the bed and barred the door; then returned, and laid himself down by the side of Edward.

"Don't grieve," he whispered; "you know, Ned, that I love you."

The little sufferer pressed his hand.

"My father shall write to Sir Richard," added George; "he will soon remove you!"

"When I am dead!" murmured the child; "when I am dead!"

Truth is said to be stranger than fiction. Some of our readers may perhaps accuse us of exaggeration in the character of the Reverend Jabez Knowles. He was no ima-

ginary person, and the author could cite several of his school-fellows still living ornaments both of the church and bar, as witnesses of a scene similar to the one he has described. But the prosecutor of Edward Trevanian is dead. Let his real name be found only on the stone which covers his remains—the hand of his former pupil shall not trace it.

CHAPTER II.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying :
And that same flower that blooms to-day,
To-morrow shall be dying. HERRICK.

FROM the day of his attack, Edward Trevanian ceased to be tormented by either the Reverend Mr. Jabez or his school-fellows. The friendship of George protected him against the latter, and a terrible secret which Doctor Bennet whispered in the ear of the schoolmaster restrained his brutal temper —even in his wildest moods reducing him to bite his thumbs in silence.

The poor, ill-used, neglected boy was dying. Aneurism of the heart had already taken place. True, he might linger on to the age of manhood, or even a year or two beyond it—but his doom was sealed.

By affecting great sorrow for what had occurred, and artfully hinting that any complaint on the part of young Maitland to his father would cause his separation from Edward, the former was induced to promise silence respecting what had occurred, and felt himself more than repaid for the treatment he had received in the immunity which it procured his friend—whom the schoolmaster, contrary to the instructions he had received from Sir Richard, permitted to pass his holidays at Trevanian House.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in the friendship of youth. Passion cannot mar its purity, or the world's interests change its rich music into discord. We pity the boy who never had a friend,—his heart lacks one of Nature's sweetest memories.

In his repeated visits to General Maitland, the mind and manners of Edward were gradually formed to that polished and intellectual tone which good society alone imparts. George had many friends—Edward only one. His heart desired no other.

He had reached his seventeenth year when the trials he most dreaded occurred —namely, the separation from George, and the return of his unnatural father—that father whose affections *had been* so cruelly estranged from him—who had committed his infant heir to the tender mercy of the Reverend Jabez Knowles.

Our readers may imagine the pang with which he saw his friend depart to join the regiment in Ireland to which he had just been gazetted.

"Bear up, Ned!" exclaimed the young soldier, vainly attempting to repress his emotion; "remember the distance is not great which separates us. Bear up for my sake. Four years more, and you will be of age—then we can roam the world together!"

"I shall never see that day," replied Edward mournfully. "I do not regret it on my own account, *but on yours!*"

"On mine!" repeated the disinterested young man, not comprehending the purport of his speech; "and why not on your own?"

"It is better that it should be so," replied his friend, sadly; "it would be unwise for me to be too strongly attached to this life. I am young, have wealth, rank—all that the world envies or worships in the present or in the future; but between me and that future," he added, "I see a grisly phantom—a yawning grave! I have struggled against the presentiment, but it will not quit me. Death has set his seal upon me. I feel it in the languor of my frame, my wearied energies, my utter indifference to all but you."

"These are mere fancies—the offspring of a too susceptible imagination. Forget them."

"Well, well, perhaps they are fancies. Time will show."

Before they separated, George promised his early friend not only to write to him weekly, but to visit him as often as he could procure leave of absence from his regiment.

"Remember," he said, "I am but a raw recruit as yet, and not likely to be sent on active service for some time to come."

Immediately after the departure of the speaker, Edward Trevanian returned to the residence of the Reverend Jabez Knowles, where he was no longer treated as a pupil. For the last two years he had had apartments of his own, and been perfectly master of his time. We need not say that it had been spent with his early champion and friend, George Maitland, after whose departure he devoted himself to the preservation of his health. He lived by rule, carefully avoided every topic in conversation that could possibly excite him, and gradually schooled himself till he became as cold and apathetic in manner as he was warm and sensitive in feeling.

The secret of this extraordinary change was, that he wished to live—he had a purpose to accomplish. That achieved, he car-

ed not how soon he threw aside the mask and yielded his worn spirit to repose.

On his arrival at the mansion, which General Maitland had vacated immediately on the baronet's return to England, Sir Richard inquired for his son. His first feeling was that of anger that he was not at the hall to meet him.

The steward informed him that he had not seen his young master since the departure of George Maitland for the army, but doubtless he would find him at the parsonage of the Rev. Mr. Jabez.

The baronet resolved to send a message for him, but on reflecting that Edward was no longer a child, decided upon going to fetch him himself. Perhaps he felt a secret reproach of conscience at his long neglect of his first-born. If so, the impression proved neither deep nor lasting.

His son by his second marriage—a spoiled boy of fifteen—and his daughter Emily, *insisted* upon accompanying him. They were anxious to see the modern Orson, as they contemptuously termed their half-brother.

Both were greatly surprised and mortified when they beheld the tall, elegant young man, who rose with well-bred self-possession from his easy chair, in the little study at the parsonage, to receive them.

Sir Richard held out his hand, and colored deeply as his son touched it slightly. He felt that he merited the reproof.

"Why, Edward, my dear boy," he exclaimed, with affected warmth, "how you are altered! I should scarcely have known you!"

"Strange, if you had!" replied the youth, with a melancholy smile; "it is more than ten years since we met. I was then a *mere child!*"

The quiet manner of the speaker, whose reproaches were the more bitter from the polished language in which he clothed them, completely upset the self-possession of the baronet.

"Your brother Walter," he said, "and your sister Emily!" pointing at the same time to his second family.

"They appear fine, healthy children!" observed Edward Trevanian, without making the least advance to a further acquaintance with them; "but no wonder," he added; "they have never known what it is to miss a parent's care!"

"A reproof, I presume!" said the father, sternly—for he began to feel excessively annoyed at the turn the conversation was taking.

"Merely an observation!" replied his son.

"*Have you* no inquiry for your mother?" demanded the baronet, feeling more and more irascible.

At the word "mother," the lips of Edward quivered for an instant, but he quickly repressed the weakness. Never during his life had he so successfully kept his feelings under the control of his will.

"Is Lady Trevanian still living?" he said.

"Living!" repeated her husband; "of course she is!"

"Not having heard either directly or indirectly of or from her ladyship for the last ten or twelve years, I may be excused the question!" quietly observed Edward.

"You will return with us to the hall?" said his father.

"With your permission," replied the son, "I would rather remain here! I am not much used to society—*particularly that of strangers!*"

Sir Richard never felt more inclined to fly into a passion in the whole course of his life—and the provocation was the more pungent from the consciousness that his unnatural conduct to his elder born merited it. One recollection alone restrained him. Edward was his elder born—the heir of his title, and what was of far greater importance, of his fortune. That was so strictly settled upon him, that even if he died without issue, he could by a stroke of his pen alienate it forever from all who bore the nane of Trevanian.

Their brief interview had given the astute, calculating man of the world sufficient insight into the character of his son to perceive that his firmness, if opposed, might amount to obstinacy; and he determined, if possible, to sooth instead of irritate the morbid sensibility which might become dangerous.

"Edward," said he, "you are unjust!"

"Prove it, sir, and I shall be the first to lament my error!"

"Unjust," continued his parent, "both towards myself and Lady Trevanian! You resent the manner in which you were left in England, without refleoting suffieiently on the motive! You are the heir not only of my paternal estate, but——"

"I am perfectly aware such is the case!" quietly observed the young man.

"Lady Trevanian has children of her own, and——"

"And is that a reason," demanded Edward, for the first time giving way to the feelings which were secretly consuming him, "that I should be consigned to the care of a wretched hireling, with instructions that he should break my temper! Fit directions for a father to leave! Break my temper!" he repeated; "in other words,

debase and brutalize my mind with blows! But you have condescended to enter on your defence, and it is fit I should hear you patiently!"

At the word "defence," the baron colored deeply—for he was a proud, and at times a very determined man. He continued, however—for there was something in the bitter irony and tone of his neglected son which awed him:

"Explanation, Edward," he said, "would have been a better word; but no matter! Had you died in Italy, the world might have accused Lady Trevanian of neglect; or worse perhaps—for it seldom judges charitably the conduct of the step-mother; therefore it was that you were placed under the care of the Rev. Jabez Knowles!"

"With instructions to use me as he pleased—to break my spirit—to brutalize my mind!" exclaimed Edward Trevanian, with more calmness; "the instrument was suited to the task! You selected him with your usual discrimination, sir!"

"And yet I cannot perceive he has done either!" observed Sir Richard somewhat sarcastically.

"Do you regret it?" demanded the youth.

"Edward, you forget that I am your father!"

"Would I could, Sir Richard. But if I have remembered it through years of neglect and misery—misery so dark and cheerless that it has left its shadow on my mind and heart, it is not probable I shall forget it now. As to my returning with you to Trevanian House, it will be against my wish if I do so; but as you are my guardian during my minority, I presume I must comply!"

"It is my wish!" exclaimed the baronet impetuously—for his forbearance was entirely exhausted, "and if necessary, my command! Do not compel me to enforce it!"

"I am aware," observed his son, "of the nature of the authority you hold over me, and shall not attempt to resist it; four years will soon elapse—and *then*——"

"*What then!*" demanded Sir Richard, eyeing him with a glance which plainly indicated his opinion that before the expiration of the time he named his neglected heir would sleep in the old monument described in the preceding chapter.

"I shall be master of myself!" exclaimed Edward, interpreting his thoughts; "fear not—*I shall live till then*, sir, and disappoint your affectionate calculations. The color on my cheek is not the hèctic of consumption! I am free—quite free—from that! Consumption will not kill me!"

So saying, he rose and left the room, to prepare for his departure.

"Don't you think my brother is mad?" demanded Walter Trevanian of his father.

"More dangerous than mad!" replied the baronet.

The youth looked at him, puzzled to comprehend how any one could be more dangerous than mad.

"I don't think he will live long!" he added; "he is so very thin, and his eyes have such an unnatural glassy brightness."

Sir Richard had observed it too, and mentally wished that the prediction of his favorite boy might prove correct—for he felt assured that if once Edward lived to reach his majority, Walter and Emily would be left beggars.

That same day the hitherto neglected Edward took up his abode with his father.

No sooner was Lady Trevanian made acquainted with the fact that an incurable disease—like the worm in the bud of the half closed flower—was slowly but surely undermining the life of her step-son, than her tactics changed—indifference gave place to apparently the most tender and anxious solicitude. We say *apparently*—for it was merely a part which the shrewd woman of world condescended to act.

Walter and Emily—not without some difficulty, however—were schooled to second her design. Young as they were, they felt the importance of conciliating their half brother—of winning his affections. True, his death would render the baronetcy certain; but if once he lived to be of age, a scratch of his pen might render it an empty honor; for Edward would then have absolute power over the estate—to say nothing of the large funded property which had been steadily accumulating during his minority.

In pursuance of this system—for such it gradually became—all ebullitions of temper and coarseness were repressed in his presence: if he entered the drawing-room and a window remained open; it was carefully closed—his easy chair was instantly vacated. Emily, who was a fine, showy girl, played and sang to him—Walter read; in short, he was surrounded with those nameless attentions so consoling to the invalid.

Gradually they made the intended impression upon his naturally grateful and susceptible nature.

There was something extremely shocking in the calculating hypocrisy of beings so young, like twin serpents, stealthily twining themselves around the heart of the youth whose death they watched and prayed for.

One evening, Edward had been the object of more than usual solicitude and attention from his step-mother and her children, and yet he endured rather than responded

to their advances. On reaching his room, his heart reproached him for his fancied injustice.

"They love me!" he said; "and like an ingrate, I have repaid their affection with indifference! There was a tear in the eye of Emily when she bade me 'good night!' Poor girl, how my coldness must have pained her! Walter too—I like him much better than I did at first! I will return make amends for my injustice!"

Just as he reached the drawing-room door, a loud laugh fell upon his ear: it surprised him, but the chill which fell upon his heart when he heard the artful girl exclaim, "Really, mamma, it is a sad bore; why does he not die at once?" may be better imagined than described.

Her brother observed that he was sick of the part he had so long been acting.

"Patience, my loves!" exclaimed Lady Trevanian; "everything is going on as I could wish. Even if he lives to reach his majority, the fortune will be yours."

A bitter smile passed over the pale lips of the invalid, and he slowly retraced his steps to his solitary chamber: the mask of which he had so nearly been made the dupe had fallen—no after artifice could replace it.

From that day he resumed his former manner towards them. Not a reproach—not a look betrayed the discovery he had made; the knowledge of their duplicity remained a secret in his own heart,—*but like most secrets, it preyed upon it.*

On the borders of the village was a pretty little rustic cottage, inhabited by a retired officer, who had served under Gen. Maitland—Adjutant Moore, and his two daughters. The old soldier was blind; a misfortune which had compelled him to quit his regiment; but the watchful care, the affectionate solicitude of his children alleviated, as far as possible his affliction. They were his guides, companions—everything to him; whilst one daughter occupied herself with the household affairs the other read or walked with him.

Life indeed would have been a blank to that old man, but for the untiring care of his girls, Fanny and Therese.

Humble as was the home of this poor family, it was a home of love. Sorrow and dissension were alike strangers to it. If the eyes of the adjutant no longer enjoyed the glorious sunshine of nature, there was a sunshine in his heart when he heard the merry laugh and song of Therese, or Fanny read to him in the long evenings of winter from the almost inspiring pages of Milton.

Perhaps it may be as well to describe the *two sisters. Imperfect* as all pen-and-ink *portraits necessarily are,* they give at least an outline which the imagination can fill up. Fanny, the eldest, was a tall, fair girl, beautiful rather in the expression than strict regularity of her features. There was a tender melancholy in her soft blue eyes, such as poets have imagined to be found in those who were destined to an early death. Her lips sometimes smiled, but her eyes were always sad. They reminded those who gazed upon them of twin violets from which the night dew had only been partially shaken. Her chestnut hair, worn in the fashion of the day, fell in wavy masses of curls—nature's own veil to modesty—over her neck and shoulders.

So exquisitely had nature harmonised her mind and body, that, despite her ignorance of calisthenics, and the lessons of the dancing-master, there was an innate grace and elegance in her deportment which art can only imitate—not give; and her voice, rich and full as the notes of the dove, was one of those pure organs which wake the echoes of the heart.

Nothing could be more beautifully touching than her untiring devotion to her father. She read and sang to him by turns—was his guide, companion, and friend. Often would the old man declare that heaven had more than recompensed his misfortune in giving him such a child—the living counterpart of her dead mother.

The beauty of Therese, on the contrary, resembled that of the sunny daughters of the South: a sparkling brunette, eyes that Titian alone could have done justice to, and a form round and symmetrical as that of a Spanish gipsy.

> Her step was grace, her bosom's swell
> Seemed like love's own gentle pillow---
> A nest for young desire to dwell---
> A sea of sweets---a snowy billow.

For a long time the old adjutant and his daughters received but one visitor—the organist of the village church—Charles Graham, a modest, unassuming young man, devoted to his profession, and—if we must confess the truth—to Therese.

Sometimes the light-hearted girl would listen to his passion, at others laugh at his sentimental speeches. When rendered more than usually unhappy by her caprice, the young organist, who had the key to the church, would repair, no matter how late the hour, to his beloved organ, and pour forth his complaining in strains of such plaintive melody that the villagers would assemble in the porch to listen to him. Some said he was mad: if so, it was the madness of the heart—not brain.

About a year before the period of the commencement of our tale, the cottage of the blind soldier received a second visitor. Edward Trevanian first called there with a

message from his friend George, who was still in Ireland: the adjutant had served in the regiment of his father, General Maitland, and George had known and loved the old man from his youth.

The visits of his messenger soon became daily.

CHAPTER III.

Words cannot paint thee, gentlest cynosure
Of all things lovely: in that loveliest form
Souls wear the youth of woman: brows as pure
As Memphian skies that never knew a storm:
Lips with such sweetness in their honeyed deeps
As fills the rose in which a fairy sleeps.

BULWER.

DESPITE the prediction of the physician and the evil anticipations of Lady Trevanian and her children, Edward lingered on till he reached his twentieth birth-day—the first of real happiness which the solitary invalid for several years had tasted—for it was cheered by the presence of his earliest friend, George Maitland, who, having obtained three months' leave of absence from his regiment, resolved to devote them to his adopted brother—which he was the better enabled to do, as the general, his father, was engaged on active service in India.

We must pass over the pleasure of such a meeting—the reunion of two hearts locked in the bands of closest friendship: hearts in which time, the cares of the world, its dreams of ambition and sordid interest, had not yet chilled youth's generous sympathies.

At first, Sir Richard and his lady were coldly polite to their visitor—but that coldness gradually changed to aversion, which expressed itself in rudeness when they discovered how closely the dying heir and his friend were united; there appeared but one heart, one soul between them.

Walter and Emily, who had long given up as hopeless their attempts to conciliate the affections of their moody brother—as they termed him—by their hypocritical attentions, scarcely kept the expression of their anger and mortification within the bounds of common decency.

The two young men were not slow to perceive the feeling of the baronet and his family. As a natural consequence, they associated with them as little as possible, passing most of their time at the cottage of the adjutant, where George Maitland was welcomed by the sisters as an old friend—they had known him from their childhood.

On these visits the sisters and the two young men would, if the weather permitted, stroll together the greater part of the day, leaving the blind old adjutant to the care of the young organist, Charles Graham. More than once they extended their excursions to Newstead Abbey—that glorious pile, inseparably connected with the name of Byron.

In their day Newstead was considered merely as a fine old mansion, interesting from its antiquity and historical associations. It has since become a shrine, hallowed as the abode of genius and misfortune. When, alas! will they cease to be inseparable.

The gossips and scandalmongers—for there were a few such personages even in dear, rural, old Farnsfield—soon began to indulge in whispers, shrugs, and comments on the extraordinary intimacy which had sprung up between the village beauties and the heir of Sir Richard Trevanian and his friend. The rector's sister—a decided old maid—predicted in strictest confidence to the lawyer's wife, that no good could come of it. The lawyer's lady in turn hinted as much to the daughters of the apothecary and schoolmaster.

"To the pure," it has been beautifully observed, "all things are pure." Fanny and Therese, conscious of the innocence of their own hearts, little suspected that their conduct had become the talk of the place—that evil minds had placed as evil a construction upon it—that they were the subject of gossip amongst their neighbors.

The young organist was the first to hear the various rumors which the busy tongue of scandal thus cruelly set afloat. To say that he was pained, would give but a slight idea of the agony he endured; not that he believed them—his confidence in the virtue of Therese was as unbounded as his love. A slight pang of jealousy he certainly did feel when he saw the sisters depart upon their rambles, each leaning upon the arm of her elegant companion.

Never had the organ of the old church—the only confidant of his feelings—poured forth such strains of plaintive melody; and during the visits of George Maitland and Edward to the cottage, what tantalised him most was, that he knew not which of the friends to be jealous of—for Therese as frequently took the arm of the young squire as that of his friend.

The poor fellow longed to speak, but dared not. He feared the mocking laugh, the teazing smile of the light-hearted girl he was so madly devoted to. It was not till he had taken the resolution twenty times, and broken it as often, that he at last found courage to broach the subject.

Therese sought him one morning at an early hour in the church—she was sure to

find him there. The village belle was dressed with more than usual care: never, in the eyes of the musician, had she appeared so lovely.

"I want to speak with you, Charles!" she said, offering him her hand.

How gently, yet how fondly did he clasp her delicate fingers in his; with what reluctance did he resign them.

"Another day of pleasure?" he said, with a sigh.

"Had you been a conjuror, Charles," replied the merry girl, "you could not have guessed more truly! Don't look so seriously! No one, I am sure, will ever take you for one!"

The arch smile of the speaker, as she uttered the words, annoyed the amorous musician exceedingly.

"I know that nature has not been too bountiful with my head!" he replied; "but in return, she has not cursed me with a corrupt heart!"

The eyes of Therese filled with tears at the reproof.

"Gold—pure gold!" she exclaimed, in a tone of self-reproach; "and I shall never forgive myself for having pained it—but I did not mean to do so! Forget it, Charles," she added, once more extending her hand to him; "my foolish tongue ran away with my judgment, or I never could have said a word to pain so true a friend! I'll not offend again!"

The anger of her lover vanished in an instant. He must have received a far more serious cause of offence to have held out against such an appeal. He sealed her pardon with his lips upon the pledge thus temptingly held out to him.

"And now that we are friends once more," continued Therese—"there, you need not kiss my hand so!—I'll tell you what has brought me thus early! I knew I should find you in the church! Fanny and I are going to Newstead!"

"Alone?" inquired the organist.

"No!"

"George Maitland and the young squire are to accompany you?" said Charles Graham, with a deep drawn sigh.

"Right again! You certainly *do improve!*" replied the pure-minded girl, not dreaming that any one could be base enough to construe evil out of that which to her was a source of innocent gratification; "and we want you to pass the day at the cottage with papa! We shall feel quite easy at leaving him in your care! You hesitate!" added the maiden, with surprise; "very well, sir—it is not often that I ask a favor of any one! Stephen Franklin will not refuse me!"

Stephen Franklin was the only son of one of the wealthiest farmers on the Trevanian estate: a dashing, merry hearted fellow, admitted by universal consent amongst the belles of Farnsfield to be the best match in the village. He had long been an ardent admirer of Therese. His character would have stood equally high with the fathers and matrons of the place, but for one drawback—an inveterate love of poaching: and poaching in those days was considered as a crime which merited the severest punishment. When detected, the squirearchy and magistrates generally proved implacable.

On all other points the conduct of the young farmer was admitted to be unexceptionable.

"Perhaps," observed the organist, deeply hurt, "he does not love you as I do, Therese!"

"At least he will oblige me more readily!" retorted the maiden.

"I will do him no wrong!" continued the young man; "with him love is a passion sparkling and brilliant as the flame which quickly consumes itself—with me it is a sentiment which has engrafted itself upon the heart, absorbing every feeling! Think, then, what I must endure should evil tongues speak lightly of my choice—profane the name I worship with the soul's fervid adoration, believe as pure as a mother's holy kiss—a father's blessing!"

The daughter of the blind old soldier stood for several moments as if trying to understand the drift of his speech. When she did comprehend it, a deep blush suffused her features—Nature's witness that she merited not the breath, much less the taint of suspicion.

"I did not expect this from you, Charles!" she replied at last, in a tone far more of sorrow than of anger; "I knew that you were jealous—but till this moment never dreamed you could be unjust! Farewell!"

She turned to quit the church—but, overcome by feelings which certainly were not those of self-reproach, she seated herself upon a tomb on which was sculptured the recumbent effigy of one of the old priors of Southwell.

Her repentant lover was at her feet in an instant.

"You must hear me!" he exclaimed; "that your heart may have no excuse for treating me with injustice! What I have said are not the ravings of a senseless jealousy—I but repeat the words which are on the lips of half the village! I need not say how they have wrung me! Several times you have asked me why I no longer visited at the rectory? I offended Miss Standish, by defending you and Fanny against her vile insinuations! You demanded why I gave up my lessons to the

daughters of the lawyer? It was because I could not sit patiently and listen to your detraction! All condemn and assign the worst motives," he added, "for your intimacy with those whom rank and fortune, in their opinion, have placed so far above you!"

"And you have heard these things?" faltered the astonished Therese, from whose lips the sunny smile had fled.

"Heard them with pain!"

"And believed them?"

"Never for an instant!" replied her lover, in a tone of indignation; "I could as soon doubt the purity of the mother who bore me as yours, Therese! If all the world condemned you, I should uphold your innocence! So perfect is my confidence, so devoted is my love, that doubt can never find entrance to my heart *conviction might* —but it would kill me! Oh, that I could prove," he added, "how perfect is my faith in you!"

At that moment neither of the speakers dreamed how soon the faith of which he boasted would be put to the test.

"I said your heart was gold, Charles—pure gold!" exclaimed Therese, deeply moved by the manly confidence and generosity of her lover—"and I was not deceived in you! Who could have thought," she added, in a tone of sorrow and surprise, "that the world was so wicked? Friends and neighbors, who have known us from childhood, to judge Fanny and myself so harshly!"

"Say, rather, unjustly!"

"Poor Edward!" continued the girl, with a sigh; "it will be a sad shock to him when he hears that his friendship has brought a blight upon the name of two poor motherless girls—and he dying too!"

"He must not know it!" replied the organist; "it would be cruel—and unnecessary as *regards him!* It is your intimacy with his friend—the handsome, gay young officer, whom all the girls of Farnsfield are raving about, that has raised these infamous reports!"

"Should they reach my father's ear," said the anxious girl, struck by a sudden terror, "they would kill him! The poor blind old man lives but in his children: they are the light which he has lost—flowers, sunshine, everything to him!" Thank heaven!" she added, in a tone whose deep earnestness, despite his confidence, removed a bitter pang from the heart of her lover, "George Maitland joins his regiment in a month!"

"And scandal, having exhausted its venom, will seek some other victim!" observed Charles Graham. "Meanwhile——"

"I will speak to George Maitland privately myself," interrupted Therese, who had suddenly become very thoughtful; "I am sure he will understand me! I fear we cannot put off this visit to Newstead!" she continued; "it would cause explanations with my father and poor Edward Trevanian which, for both their sakes, are much better avoided!"

The musician thought so, too: and, as a recompence, was permitted to escort the fair speaker to the cottage, where her sister and the two friends were already prepared to start on their visit to Newstead.

From that day it was observed that the walks of the sister and their visitors were confined to the little garden of the adjutant's cottage—not that they became less frequent. The old soldier was delighted with the conversation of the son of his former general —it broke the monotony of his existence. He looked upon him and Edward, as well as his two girls, as mere children—forgetting that one spark from the Promethean torch of Love anticipates the wing of Time, and changes the current of existence.

To the great annoyance of Lady Trevanian, the visits of her step-son to the cottage did not cease with the departure of his friend—who, at the expiration of his leave of absence, started from Farnsfield to rejoin his regiment in Ireland. Edward was still seen at the adjutant's as frequently as ever—generally in the garden with Fanny—but sometimes with her sister.

The invalid had borne the separation from George—whom he *knew* he should never see again—with a firmness which surprised every one who knew how tender was the tie of friendship which united them. It was but another proof of the strong influence which the will can exercise over the heart: he dared not feel, lest the purpose of his life should be defeated.

Strange to say, from the day of his quitting him, Edward never received letter or communication of any kind from his friend. This, whether justly or not, he attributed to the machinations of Lady Trevanian.

About a month before our tale commenced, at the earnest entreaty of his physician, Doctor Bennet, the invalid confined himself to his own room. The only amusement he permitted himself was in writing long letters to Fanny and her sister: these he intrusted to his valet, Duncan, the son of the female who had been his mother's nurse —a straightforward, honest fellow, about his own age—whom no cajoleries could could persuade or flattery corrupt—so devotedly was he attached to his young master.

When the visits of Edward ceased, the health of Fanny rapidly gave way; and,

without suspecting the reason, her sister could not avoid connecting one event with the other. She frequently found her in tears—she complained of cold—and even in the house kept herself muffled in a thick shawl.

On one occasion Therese implored her to receive medical advice, the suffering girl refused almost with an expression of terror.

"It will soon pass!" she said; "and it will be cruel to alarm our father unnecessarily!"

When Therese spoke of her sister's illness to the old servant who had attended them in their infancy, Mary Page shook her head, and replied to her by half words and muttered sentences, which only bewildered her young mistress more and more—she could not comprehend it. The adjutant at last perceived that his favorite child was suffering: true, he could not read it in her sunken eyes and faded cheek—but her voice betrayed it to him, and he insisted that Dr. Bennet should be sent for.

Fanny gave a reluctant assent—and that same night sent off a hurried letter to the hall by the hands of her usual messenger, Duncan.

Great was the shock to Therese, when the kind hearted medical man privately informed her that Fanny was soon to become a mother—she could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses.

A plan was arranged by which, when the time should come, the birth of the infant might take place without the knowledge of its grandfather—who, under the influence of wounded pride and outraged honor, was capable, in the first impulse of his indignation, of cursing his unhappy child.

No intreaty could wring from Fanny the name of her betrayer. In reply to her sister's solicitations upon the subject, she only answered that her lips were sealed by an oath, which she dared not break.

Such was the state of affairs on the evening of the day when the three travellers inquired of the sexton of Farnsfield the road to the Trevanian Arms.

CHAPTER IV.

Ne'er be I found by thee e'erawed
Inthat thrice-hallowed eve abroad,
When ghosts, as cottage maids, believe,
Their pebbled beds permitted leave,
And goblins haunt o'er fire and fen,
O'er wilds and flood the haunts of men.
COLLINS'S ODE TO FEAR.

In pursuance of his design of attempting *to obtain a clue to what* was going on at Bet Guyton's, the old sexton trudged the three long miles between the church at Farnsfield and the Trevanian Arms; it was about ten o'clock when he arrived; to his astonishment, he found both doors and windows closed.

"Rather an unusual thing," he thought, "for Bet to retire so early!"

But Bet had not retired—and of this he speedily convinced himself; for, on applying his ear to the shutter, he distinctly heard the voices of several persons conversing in an under-tone in the little parlor.

"The soldier, the parson, and the lawyer—they be come for no good!" he muttered. "I am determined to see the end of it!"

So saying, he quitted his post at the window, and marched boldly towards the door of the cottage, singing, as he approached, a snatch of one of his favorite songs, in order to avoid exciting suspicion.

Mike Tippin, the sexton, at the door of an ale-house without his song, would have occasioned as much surprise as a parson in the pulpit without his gown, or a soldier on parade without his sword:

The old church bell, how it booms from the tower,
Sullen and sad as the lone midnight hour;
Life's pathway it marks on the dial of Time
From infancy's years to manhood's wild prime.
We may fly from its sound, but flight is in vain—
Tho' forgotten for years, we must hear it again;
What far land we seek, wherever we roam,
It will boom from the tower to welcome us home.

"What, ho! house!" shouted the sexton, knocking at the same time lustily at the door of the cottage with his gnarled crab-stick; "what a plague! Are ye all a-bed at this early hour?"

The sexton knew that they were not in bed, but it answered his purpose to affect to think so. Presently is heard the sound of voices whispering in the little parlor below; not to appear to be listening, he resumed the burthen of his song:

Sad and stern are it sounds, as torn from the heart,
One by one we behold all life's treasures depart;
Wife, children, and friends—it calls to the grave,
Till we linger a wreck on humanity's wave;
Then, when our dark locks are whitened by age,
And Time in life's volume has reached the last page,
Still the old church bell bids our steps cease to roam,
As it booms from the tower to welcome us home!

At the end of the old man's song, the casement directly over the porch of the cottage was opened, and Bet Guyton, the hostess of the Trevanian Arms, demanded in a shrill, shrewish voice, what drunkard was there.

"Drunkard!" repeated the sexton, in a tone of indignation; "why, I am as dry as sorrow—not a drop has passed my lips since dinner! Don't you know your old acquaintance, Mike?"

"What Mike?"

"*What Mike?* Why your old friend Mike, the sexton, to be sure, who dug your

husband's grave—and a good one it was! Poor fellow—he always liked to have everything comfortable about him!"

"Friend or no friend—drunk or sober," replied the woman, "I shan't open my doors to night! I have been in bed this hour!"

"That's a lie!" mentally ejaculated the old man.

"And I advise you to hasten home, and follow my example!"

So saying, Bet Guyton closed the window; at the same time the light in the little parlor below was extinguished—the voices for some time had ceased.

The old eavesdropper knew that when Bet had once said the word, it was of little use to argue the point with her; the repulse he had met only increased his anxiety, and he determined to watch the house till daybreak.

The sexton—who prided himself upon seeing as far into a mill-stone as most men—very naturally argued that it was equally certain the inmates of the house would watch him. Muttering a curse sufficiently audible for the three mysterious guests to hear, he commenced the snatch of a second song, crossed the road in front of the little inn, and entered a foot path leading through the park of Sir Richard, as his nearest way to Farnsfield.

He had not proceeded more than a hundred yards before he came to a clump of firs and shrubs, in which he concealed himself. As the moon was shining brightly, he had an uninterrupted view across the great avenue leading to the hall, and the bit of road between the lodge and the Trevanian Arms. It was impossible for any one to enter or quit the house without his perceiving him.

"There!" said the old man, after complacently surveying the position he had chosen. "I shall out-manœuvre Bet, after all! They must hide well that hide from me! Even the grave," he added, "can't keep its secret!"

Mike continued to watch for more than an hour and a half. Occasionally he was startled by a deer breaking through the underwood, or a hare crossing the avenue. So perfectly still was the night that he distinctly heard the village clock strike the hour of twelve; for the first time in his life he felt a nervous, chilly sensation creep over him.

"Strange!" he thought; "I have been in the belfry later than this, and never felt afeard before!"

He forgot that years had made it like a home to him.

Mike had almost made up his mind to give over his apparently fruitless watch, and return home, when the sound of the great bell of the hall came booming heavily on the night air. He listened—the sound was not repeated.

It was generally said in Farnsfield, that it tolled voluntarily on the death of a male of the house of Trevanian—and the sexton was a devout believer in the superstition.

"Poor young squire!" he said; "gone at last! There is no mistaking the death-knell of his race! Those who have once heard it seldom forget it! I should like to have been in the churchyard," he added, "to see the iron door of the vault open and close again—as they say it does, of its own accord—to admit the dead man's spirit! My father saw it once, but he never liked to speak about it!"

To do him justice, the regret he experienced at the death of Edward Trevanian was sincere: he thought more of the loss to the poor and aged than his fees on the occasion of the funeral.

Just as Mike resolved to return home, he saw a tall figure, enveloped in a cloak, walking very slowly down the avenue. In an instant Mike's curiosity was on the *qui vive*—he forgot all about the dead heir, and the loss it would prove to the poor.

Mike continued to gaze, feeling that the solution of the mystery was at hand. After all, curiosity, perhaps, was the greatest of the old man's failings. Just as the personage whose singular appearance had so excited his attention reached that part of the avenue in a direct line with the old man's place of concealment, he made in his eagerness a slight rustling in the shrubs. It caused the object of his watch to turn round—and he recognised, to his terror and astonishment, the pale, ghastly features of Edward Trevanian.

Scarcely could he believe the evidence of his own senses. Taking courage, however, he advanced from his hiding place.

"In the name of heaven, Master Edward!" he faltered, "what brings you here?"

The spectre—for such he began to feel assured it was—turned its glassy eyes upon the speaker—whose teeth chattered with terror, whilst a cold sweat hung like the night-dew upon every limb.

"You heard the summons of my race?" replied a deep, sad voice.

"I did!"

"You may prepare my place in the old vault—it is time I rested there!"

It is said that extreme fright will sometimes produce extreme courage. In alluding to the burial-place of his family, the spectre—real or supposed—extended his hand in the direction of Farnsfield Church. To convince himself whether it was a thing of earth or not that he had spoken with, Mike grasped it: had he clutched an icicle, it could not have shot a greater chill through

his frame—never had he felt the hand of a corpse so cold.

With a deep groan, he fell senseless in the avenue, and the object of his terror passed silently on.

The sexton and Edward were not the only persons who were on foot in the park at that unusual hour of the night. Stephen Franklin and several of his roystering companions, taking advantage of the supposed grief and confusion at the hall, from the hourly-expected death of the heir, had been beating the covers; and, after several hours' uninterrupted sport, were returning home, when they stumbled on the body of the sexton.

"What's this?" exclaimed the young farmer, recoiling with surprise. "Murder, I fear, has been committed here!"

He was confirmed in his opinion by the dogs whining round the still inanimate form of the sexton.

"Down—down!" said Mark Thornton, another of the poachers. "Call the dogs off, Stephen—they will bring the keepers on us else: they mind only you! As I live," added the speaker, "it is old Mike! Who could have harmed him?"

With all his faults, Mike was a favorite with the young men. His solemn gravity, when the dignity of his office was called in question—his quaint sayings and snatches of songs amused them. Although he had been a terror to most of them when children, not one of the party would have harmed a hair of the old man's head.

Their first care was to raise him.

"I don't see any blood!" observed Stephen, at the same time holding a pocket-flask to his lips; "and he breathes heavily! Ah! I thought that would revive him!"

The sexton gave a deep groan.

"Where are you hurt, Mike?" inquired Mark Thornton; "on the head?"

The supposition was not an unnatural one, seeing that the object of their care for several minutes after his restoration to consciousness continued to gaze around him with a wild and terrified stare, as if he expected to encounter some fearful object.

"Gone!" he murmured; "gone?"

"Who is gone?" demanded several of the poachers.

"I saw him, or I could not have believed it!"

"Saw who?"

"Cold—cold!" added the sexton, with a shudder; "cold as the grave! I shall never forget it!"

"You are drunk!" observed one of the young men, impatiently.

"It is with terror, boys!" replied the sexton, who now began to recognise them. "*I have seen what few have ever* been permitted to see—what I never believed in thoroughly till now! But I am punished for my doubts!"

"In the name of heaven, what have you seen?" demanded the poachers, simultaneously—for their curiosity was raised to the highest pitch.

"The dead!" answered the old man, solemnly; "stalking like a living thing! I have spoken with it—touched it! You have heard the great bell of the hall?"

"Two hours since!" said Stephen Franklin, in a low tone of voice.

"And know what it meant?"

"Why they do say that it tolls of itself when a male of the house of Trevanian is called to his account! Poor Master Edward!" added the young farmer, in a tone of regret; "gone at last!"

"I spoke with him here!"

"With whom? Who are you talking of?"

"With Edward Trevanian!" replied the sexton. "With him whose generous hand and kind heart are now as cold as death can make them! He walked pass me here, dressed like a mourner at a funeral!"

"You must have been dreaming!" observed several of his listeners.

"I spoke to him!"

"Did he answer you?"

"He bade me get his place ready in the old vault!" said Mike, to his astonished auditors; "still I did not feel convinced! I touched his hand—it was that of a corpse!"

The more daring of the party of young men refused to believe him, declaring that he was either practising upon their terrors, or had been deceived by his own imagination.

At this moment, as if to give the lie to their incredulity, the tall, ghost-like figure of Edward Trevanian was seen returning up the avenue. Stephen Franklin was the first to perceive it. Surprise and horror so completely mastered his senses, that he could only point him out to his companions.

Slowly and with his hand pressed upon his heart, like one in great pain, the object of their terror passed on—sufficiently near to enable the terror-stricken poachers distinctly to recognise his features. They could endure no more, but fled the spot.

Not one of them could ever tell, when the recollection of that night returned, how they succeeded in reaching their homes in Farnsfield.

The death of Edward Trevanian was not discovered till the following morning, when his faithful servant, Duncan, on entering the chamber, discovered his young master a corpse: the aneurism had broken in the night, and the heart of the noble fellow broke with it.

He died alone—no kindred voice to breathe the parting prayer beside him—no tear of affection to assure him that his name would be remembered as a household word—a memory—amongst them; died, a few hours after he had come into possession of wealth—the means of spreading happiness around him—of following the dictates of a generous, loving nature—of repairing the wrongs of fortune—of drying the tear in many a mourner's eye.

The grief of his relatives was displayed in the only way they could show it: they could not give him tears, when their hearts were filled with secret joy—so they gave the neglected heir a magnificent funeral. The tenantry followed on horseback, and the richly escutcheoned pall was held by the unmarried sons of several of the first families in the county.

The only real mourners in Farnsfield were his servant Duncan, and the daughter of the blind old adjutant. Therese mourned for him as for a brother, whilst her sister—words can scarcely paint her grief—it was the agony of a heart which had lost its last stay on earth. Bitter and hopeless were the tears she shed—weeping like one that refused to be comforted.

From the day of his brother's death, Walter Trevanian became more insolent to the dependents of his father than ever. He was now the undoubted heir of the baronetcy and estates of his father. His weak, fond mother indulged him in every caprice.

The grief of Duncan for the loss of his master appeared like a reproach to his own selfish joy, and Walter Trevanian insisted on his being discharged from the family. He even carried his malice so far as to prevail on Sir Richard to refuse the young man a character—an act of injustice which, in after-life, recoiled bitterly on the heads of both father and son.

"But the Trevanians were ever considered a strange race!" as Mike, the sexton, observed, when he assisted to lower the body of Edward into the vault; "and never acted or thought like any other people!" When our readers reflect on the strange sight he had seen in the park, the night of the young heir's death, they will scarcely feel surprised at the old man's opinion.

CHAPTER V.

To gaze upon the loved in death,
To mark the closing beamless eye,
To press dear lips—and find no breath,
This, this is life's worst agony.
But God, too merciful, too wise,
To leave the lone one in despair,
Whispers, while snatching those we prize,
"My kingdom come! Ye'll meet them there!"

ELIZA COOK.

The moment so long dreaded, so anxiously expected by her sister and the old servant, Mary Page—whose fidelity to her master's daughter was beyond suspicion—at last arrived; and Fanny, forced to conceal alike a mother's joy and a mother's agony, gave birth to a female child.

Despite the mystery which shrouded the parentage of her infant, the young mother welcomed it with transport and sorrow. Its first baptism were the tears she shed over it when Dr. Bennet gently hinted at the necessity of removing it at once from the cottage, before its existence was suspected by the blind old grandfather.

"I cannot part with it!" she sobbed. "It is the only pledge left me of his love! It will kill me!"

"Whose love, dearest?" inquired the old domestic.

Her young mistress gazed upon her for an instant and burst into an agony of tears.

We see the most timid of heaven's creatures, armed with the strong instincts of maternity, become bold in defence of their young. The dread of her father's wrath had hitherto been the great terror of Fanny, but rather than part with her child, she would have braved even that.

"He will not curse me," she exclaimed, "when he hears its plaintive cry! The innocence of my child shall atone for my disobedience! Go to him, Therese—fall at his feet, and———"

Then the fear—the awful dread of hearing the blind old man invoke a malediction on the daughter whose disobedience had dishonored him, would overcome the sufferer's momentary resolution and she would frantically call her back.

It was during a fit of temporary insensibility that the infant was removed from her, and conveyed, the following night, to the house of a widow woman, with whom the benevolent physician had made an arrangement to receive it.

When Fanny recovered, and missed her infant, her despair and grief threatened to discover all. The tender endearments of her sister, the tears of the old servant, and the representations of Dr. Bennet scarcely availed to calm the transports of her sorrow.

From that day, her sister and the servant

both noticed a marked change take place. The feverish excitement which had so long and fatally been undermining the health of the sufferer, gave place to a calm amounting almost to apathy. Poor Therese, ignorant of the cause, felt delighted with the change; to her it appeared the first sign of approaching convalescence; not so to the experienced physician—to him it was the symptom of approaching death.

For several weeks the patient sufferer continued to linger on, but gradually sinking, till the credulity of affection could no longer deceive itself with hope. All felt that she was dying, except the blind old soldier, who used to sit for hours by the side of his darling child, holding her hand in his, blessing and praying for her.

It was a fearful blow to him when, one evening, the doctor drew him into the little garden at the back of the cottage, and imparted, as gently as possible, the dreadful intelligence that his eldest born had but few hours to live.

The adjutant had borne up manfully against the other ills of life: poverty—he scarcely felt it; the privation of sight—the patient love and untiring attention of his children—their solicitude—lessened the affliction; and now he was threatened with the loss of one of them—his darling Fanny—whom he sometimes reproached himself for loving better than her sister; perhaps because she was the image of her mother, and he had a more vivid recollection of her features—Therese being a mere infant when the living darkness fell upon him.

"Is there no hope?" he faltered. "*There must be!* God is too merciful to rob a blind old father of his only stay!"

"You forget Therese!" observed Dr. Bennet, gravely.

"True—true!" exclaimed the adjutant, in a tone of self-reproach. "I have been unjust, and God has punished me! I never murmured!" he added, after a pause; "but this blow has fallen upon my heart and crushed me! Leave me!" he continued; "pray leave me! I must wrestle with this grief alone!"

The friendly physician withdrew to the house, leaving the old soldier in the garden by himself.

It was astonishing how Therese bore up against the intelligence; but the very depth of her love for her sister sustained her. She watched over her with a burning, anxious eye; she could not weep; tears would have relieved her.

"You will not forget me when I am gone!" said Fanny, as she lay with the hand of Therese clasped in hers; "and you will forgive me all the pain and trouble I have caused you! My infant!" she added, lowering her voice to the faintest whisper, as if she feared lest the echoes of the cottage should repeat the secret: "watch over it—be a mother to its helplessness and innocence—it will soon have no other parent than you! You promise me?"

"I do!" replied her broken hearted sister. "Should heaven take you from me, to devote myself to its happiness—to love it, Fanny, as I have loved you!"

The dying girl threw her arms around the neck of the speaker, and thanked her with a grateful kiss.

"My poor father!" she murmured; "it will be a sad blow to him in his age and blindness—for, despite my faults, he loved his wayward child—loved me as you have done, Therese!"

The langour with which she had spoken suddenly gave way to the most intense excitement. Half rising from the pillow which supported her, she grasped her sister by the hand, and, fixing her eyes upon her with an expression of mingled agony and terror, exclaimed:

"You will conceal from him the secret of my shame! He would curse me!" she added, with a shudder; "his malediction would follow me to the judgment-seat, and close the gates of heaven against me! Promise me," she continued, clinging yet more closely to the terrified Therese, "by the memory of our childhood—by the love which has ever existed between us—that our father shall never learn from your lips his child proved unworthy of him!"

Therese felt a singular misgiving that the promise demanded under such afflicting circumstances might one day recoil on herself; yet she gave it—unhesitatingly gave it. There was more moral heroism in that girl's simple, affectionate heart than her once sunny smile and merry glance would have led one to suppose.

Satisfied with the pledge—which Fanny well knew would be kept more religiously than many keep their oaths—she gradually became more calm.

"Should my child live," she continued, "you will lead her sometimes to my grave—paint to her the agony I endured—my shame and remorse—my early death e'en in life's freshest spring. It would grieve my restless spirit if I thought my infant would judge harshly of its mother!"

Therese thought this a favorable moment for putting a question which she longed yet dreaded to ask: it was no feeling of idle curiosity, but a sense of duty which urged her.

"Should she ever ask the name of her father?" she whispered.

Fanny raised her hand, and faintly articulated:

"He is in heaven!"

"In heaven!" exclaimed her sister, indignantly. "No, Fanny—no! The man who could deceive a heart like yours—basely leave you to the shame and the remorse of a broken heart, has little chance of heaven! Curse him—curse him, for a heartless———"

"Therese!" frantically interrupted the dying girl, "beware lest you blaspheme against the dead—bless him—the noblest, best, the most generous of men! His memory is the dearest, only treasure left me—his image will be the last to fade from my poor heart—his smile the first to welcome me when the grave's dread barriers no longer exist beween us!"

"Is it possible that you speak thus of your seducer?" observed her sister.

At the word "seducer," a faint blush suffused for an instant the marble features of Fanny. She slowly raised her finger to her lips, as if fearful lest some half forgotten promise should escape her, and faintly smiled.

Never had she looked more beautiful.

A sudden ray of hope entered the heart of her sister. It was possible, after all, that the dying girl was far less culpable than she imagined. Sinking on her knees by the side of the little bed, she clasped her hand.

"One word!" she whispered. "Are you a wife?"

"In the eyes of heaven, yes!"

"But in man's?" added Therese in a tone of disappointment.

"I soon shall be!" replied Fanny; "for the grave will unite us both!"

It was clear that, whatever the nature of her secret, the poor girl was determined it should die with her. The hope vanished in the heart of Therese almost as suddenly as it had been created; and from that hour she never asked her sister another question on the subject.

When Dr. Bennet returned to the garden, he found the blind old soldier upon his knees in prayer—seeking strength to bear up against the heavy affliction which threatened him where strength only could be found. There was something so sacred in the sorrow of the parent of Fanny, the physician felt that even his presence was an intrusion—he retired, therefore, to summon Therese. His child was the fitting person to break upon his solitary prayer.

"Have you told him?" she demanded, as he led her to the garden.

"I have!"

"And how does he support it? The blow must have been fearful—for Fanny was his favorite child—as she deserved to be!" *she added with a burst of* generous feeling which proved that the preference of the adjutant had never caused his younger daughter one single pang of jealousy. Loving Fanny so tenderly as she did, it only appeared natural to her.

Dr. Bennet gazed on her with respect and admiration. Rarely had he seen more firmness under trying circumstances, mingled with such devoted tenderness.

"You are a good girl," he said, "and heaven will one day reward you!"

Therese looked at him with surprise—she could not understand what she had done to merit his praise.

"Is your sister prepared for the interview?" added the physician.

"Yes sir!"

"You had better lead your father in, then!" he continued; "for I fear that a few hours———"

"No—no!" exclaimed Therese, grasping him by the hand; "do not say that you have abandoned all hope! It is hard to die for one so young—so beautiful———"

She would have added, "so good," but a painful though restrained her.

"In this life," continued the kind-hearted man, "we have all painful duties at one time or other to perform—from the cradle to the grave it is but a tissue of trials—at best a tangled web, more frequently cut than unravelled! You have hitherto performed yours admirably," he added; "you will not be wanting how!"

Therese understood him, and quitting his side, silently approached the spot where the old adjutant was still occupied in prayer. Quietly kneeling beside him, she joined her voice with his. As the words—"Thy will be done" broke from her lips, her father became conscious of her presence. Throwing his arms around her, he exclaimed:

"My heart is not yet desolate—I have one child left me still!"

"And one who loves you tenderly, dear father!" replied Therese: "who will watch over you with redoubled care, should heaven deprive us of———"

She could not pronounce the name of her sister—a choking sensation in her throat prevented her.

"Come, father!" she added; Fanny expects us!"

The old man rose from his knees, and took the arm of his child. The muscles of his venerable countenance were fixed and rigid with the strong control he exercised over his feelings; it was the hour of the great sacrifice of his existence. Vainly had the old soldier thought to prepare himself by prayer to meet it.

Earth has no severer trial than the death-hour of those we love—the sundering of ties which have grown like tendrils out

of the heart, twining themselves with the springs of life till they become part of our very being—to know that we listen to the broken accents of the voice so dear to us, for the last time—to watch the approaching agony, the fluttering breath.

An instant, and the being whose presence made the sunshine of a happy home, whose virtues hallowed it, has pased away—and what remains? regret—a memory—ashes.

No sooner did the blind old soldier enter the chamber of his dying child, and feel her thin, wasted arms thrown with passionate tenderness around his neck, than the fortitude he had prayed for abandoned him. He pressed her convulsively to his breast, and tears streamed from his sightless eyeballs down his venerable features.

He had braved the King of Terrors a hundred times on the battle-field—seen the comrades of his youth, and the brothers of his manhood, swept away from his side—mourned over the death of the wife of his affection—but never experienced an agony like the present hour.

"You are a good man, father!" sobbed the dying girl; "and God will give you strength to bear up against this affliction! Besides, Therese is left to you! She will support and comfort you when I am gone!"

"I have borne much!" exclaimed the old man; "and never yet murmured at the hand which chastened me! The loss of my sight withdrew my affections from the world to centre them in my children, whose love alleviated my misfortune! And now to lose you! Why should the trunk be spared, and not the tender branch? Fanny—Fanny! my darling child!" he added, with a burst of grief; "would to heaven that I could die for thee!"

Some moments elapsed before either the dying girl or her heart-broken parent could speak again.

Therese, who was kneeling at the foot of the bed, prayed fervently. She dared not indulge in tears—the luxury of grief. The *necessity* of appearing calm and collected sustained her; for she well knew that her task ended not with the death of the sister she so tenderly loved: her father would then have no other stay.

It was a piteous sight to see the poor blind man pass his trembling hand over the wasted features of his child, as if to impress them on his memory—something for the heart to dwell upon.

"Bless me!" she whispered. "Forgive me all my faults and disobedience to you! Let me hear your sacred lips pronounce the word of pardon! I shall die happier—*much happier*—assured of your forgiveness *The Father of all,*" she added, "will *show mercy to the child* who kneels before His throne rich in her earthly father's blessing and forgiveness."

"Pardon!" repeated the adjutant, with deep emotion; "my sinless treasure! What have I to pardon? Your life has been a sacrifice to your poor blind father! You have been light to his eyes—a guide to his feeble steps! When I lose you, the darkness will fall upon my heart!"

"Therese will supply my place!"

"Therese is a good girl, and I love her dearly—very dearly! But——"

His daughter kissed him, to prevent the avowal of a preference which she well knew would wound her sister to the heart. She was aware that from childhood she had been the old man's favorite.

"Your blessing, father!" she murmured; "your blessing!"

Her parent placed his hand upon her head; it lingered fondly for an instant on the long, silken curls—true, he had not seen them for years, but be remembered them; they were the same color as his wife's, too—the wife he had so passionately loved—so deeply mourned.

"I bless you, Fanny," he sobbed—for tears impeded his utterance, "with a father's holiest blessing! I bless you for your duty and obedience! For——"

"No—no!" hastily interrupted his daughter; "for my love, father—for my love! That, at least, has never sinned against you!"

Could the adjutant have seen the look of agony and remorse which accompanied her words, a suspicion of something yet untold must have struck him; as it was, he mistook it for humility—and the conviction only rendered her more dear to him.

"And for your love," he added "which has been as perfect as your obedience! I shall soon rejoin you, Fanny!" he continued, pressing his lips to her forehead, upon which the death-dews were already gathering, sealing, by a personal kiss, the blessing and forgiveness he had pronounced; "rejoin you in that land where all will be light again—where the smiles of the first angels who welcome will be yours and your dear mother's!"

"And you will not revoke it?" said Fanny, after a pause.

"Revoke it!"

"I mean," continued his daughter, speaking with increased difficulty, "that when I am gone, faults you have passed over in your love—negligences which are forgotten now—may——"

"Fanny, dear Fanny!" said her sister, gently taking her by the hand; "such words distress our father."

The warning look recalled the sufferer to herself. Feeling that her last moments

were approaching she clasped her hands upon her bosom, and prayed fervently but *silently*—prayed for her infant, soon to be an orphan. What would she not have given at that moment to imprint a kiss upon its innocent cheek—a dying mother's kiss—have wept over it and blessed it? But that consolation was denied her.

"I am going, Therese!" she faltered; "raise me—in your arms, Therese! 'Tis sweet to die in the arms of one so good—so loving!"

Her sister, with the same calm fortitude which had sustained her during the agony of such a scene, complied with her request, and the head of the dying girl rested on her bosom.

The father fell upon his knees and tried to pray—but grief choked his utterance.

Fanny turned her eyes imploringly upon her, and, with a last effort, murmured in her ear:

"Your promise!"

A silent appeal to heaven that it should be kept, was the only reply the devoted Therese could make—she dared not trust herself to speak. The sufferer understood her—a faint smile flitted for an instant over her features.

"Bless you—my own true sister!"

It was the last word her lips uttered—and with it her spirit fled. The chords of life were broken—as true a heart as ever trusted man had ceased to beat.

Time alone can show whether he who won it had deserved it.

So gently had the spirit of his daughter passed away, that the blind man was not aware all was over till Therese stole gently to the side of the bed, where he was still kneeling, and, throwing her arms around him, said, in a broken voice:

"Father! heaven has one angel more!"

Then, like the chords of a lute which had been overstrung, the strength and fortitude of the poor girl gave way; tears gushed to her relief, and she wept as affection weeps over the heart's broken tie.

Over such sorrow we must draw a veil. Can language paint it? No! it may be felt—not described. Few amongst our readers but have witnessed the death-pang of some being whom they loved—whose memory is embalmed in tears and treasured in their hearts—whose smiles return to them in dreams which afford a tender, melancholy satisfaction, when pondered over in life's waking hours.

Therese guided the footsteps of her poor blind father to the grave of his favorite child, and back to the cottage—once the home of love and happiness. But from that day her health gave way—a nervous fever robbed her cheek *of its fulness, her* dark eye of its lustre; and when, after weeks of suffering—during which her life had been despaired of—she made her appearance at the village church, few would have recognised in the pale, emaciated girl the once light-hearted, beautiful daughter of the adjutant.

During her illness, the young organist, Charles Graham, supplied her place as the guide and companion of her father, whose slender income was sadly straitened by the double affliction which had fallen upon him. This the generous-hearted young man endeavored to alleviate, as far as his humble means permitted. One day it was fruit which had been given him—another, wine and other delicacies that his pupils had sent him. Once—and once only—he ventured to offer money; but the honest pride of the old soldier became alarmed, and he dared not repeat the offer.

In the midst of his anxiety, the musician was daily—nay, almost hourly—annoyed by the reports of evil tongues, which had busied themselves with the fair fame of *both* the sisters. It required all his tact to keep them from the ears of the adjutant. We say that he felt annoyed at them; as to believing them, they never made the least impression upon his heart; but then, as Therese observed, on the morning of their interview in the old church of Farnsfield, "That was gold—pure gold!"

The conduct of her lover did not belie her opinion of it.

CHAPTER VI.

There was a soft and pensive grace,
A cast of thought upon her face.
That suited well the forehead high—
The eyelash dark—the downcast eye.
The mild expression spoke a mind
In duty firm, composed, resigned.
WALTER SCOTT.

With returning health came the necessity of exertion—for the illness and funeral of Fanny had made fearful inroads on the scanty means of the adjutant, which were yet further decreased by the lingering sickness of her surviving sister.

Therese was not a girl to sit patiently down and see her aged parent deprived of those little comforts which habit had made necessary to him—and after some days of anxious consideration, it was made known in Farnsfield that she was willing to employ her leisure time in needlework.

Some gave her work from curiosity—they were anxious to see and question her; it was a triumph to the rector's sister and

the purse-proud daughters of the lawyer to witness what they considered the humiliation of the once light-hearted, happy girl, whose beauty had been the theme of so many tongues—eclipsing their *genteeler* pretensions. Others assisted her from a more generous motive—pity: they saw the struggle between honest pride and poverty.

It was a terrible shock to her father when he first discovered how his remaining child employed her time—he felt both angry and annoyed. Angry, because it sometimes deprived him of those little attentions so necessary to him; annoyed, at the idea of a daughter of his being reduced to such a necessity. The blind old man could not forget that he had borne the commission of his sovereign, and in station was a gentleman.

Poor Therese could not comprehend the objections of her parent, although she strove anxiously to soothe them. She felt —and rightly—that the motive sanctified her labor.

The young farmer, Stephen Franklin, was still a constant visitor at the cottage, much to the annoyance of his mother—who, being own sister to the housekeeper at the hall, considered herself by an indefinite kind of link connected with the aristocracy; and the thought of her son—who had only to choose, to be accepted by the richest girl in Farnsfield—throwing himself away, as she termed it, upon the daughter of a blind old beggar, was mortifying to her pride in the extreme. The possibility of Therese refusing her darling boy never once entered her imagination—it would have made her yet more bitter against her.

Such is the strange contradiction of humanity.

Charles Graham, who had lost most of his pupils through his chivalrous defence of the unhappy Fanny, had accepted the place of organist at the little town of Mansfield. It was a sad blow to him to be compelled to quit his native village and the dear old organ at Farnsfield. Scarcely an evening passed that he did not walk over, generally with some little present in his hand, to the inmates of the cottage.

The adjutant looked for his visits, and felt annoyed if he did not come. Therese received him with a gentle smile.

The poor musician knew not what to attribute the altered manner of the once light-hearted girl; the sadness of her smile perplexed him: he had a thousand times rather she had rallied him and laughed at his love-speeches, as in the happy period of their earlier acquaintance—he could have understood that. The continual presence of Stephen was another source of annoyance. Lovers are proverbially quick-sighted where a rival is concerned—and he soon discovered that the errand of the young farmer was similar to his own. He saw, too, that Therese perceived his anxiety to obtain a private interview with her, and studiously avoided it.

One evening fortune favored the musician. His rival, unable to resist the solicitations of his fond but misjudging mother, had prevailed on him to accompany her to the annual feast at South Collingham, a neighboring village, situated on the banks of the Trent, a few miles from Farnsfield. Therese had to take home some work she had been all day engaged upon, and Charles offered to accompany her.

She would have declined his escort—but her father insisted on her accepting it, observing that the hour was too late for her to go out alone, and the house she was going to was at the extreme end of the village.

"We are selfish beings!" said her lover, with a sigh, as they entered the narrow footpath leading through the corn-field to the old church. "I saw that you did not wish me to go with you—and yet, Therese, I could not resist the pleasure—for I have long desired to speak with you alone!"

Despite the schooling she had given her heart, the poor girl trembled violently. She guessed the words which were about to follow.

"You have long known that I love you," resumed the young man, after a pause, during which he had gathered courage for the explanation which he wished, yet dreaded; "but you will never know how deeply—how devotedly! I was a mere boy, Therese, when the feeling first took possession of me —and you a light, joyous girl, just emerging from the grace of childhood. Often have I quitted my companions, and sat for hours on the tombstones in the churchyard, thinking of you! My comrades called me a dreamer—they little knew how happy such dreams are. The feeling has grown with my growth—strengthened with my years; twined itself so closely round my heart, that it has become part of my existence—part, do I say? It is its light and hope! You are not angry with me? you will listen to me—listen to me patiently—for I would not offend you for the world!"

"I am not angry!" answered Therese, in a very low tone; "few but might feel proud of such a love!"

"Well, then," said the organist, encouraged by the gentleness of her manner towards him, "I have at last found courage to say, 'Therese will you share that love—accept the heart which knows no other image than yours?' Do not answer me yet!" he added, eagerly; "you have not heard all I have to urge: the home I offer

you is a humble, but it may be a happy one —my income is better, by thirty pounds a year, at Mansfield! I have a small sum which my grandfather left me—am young, and not without talent, they tell me. Will you be my wife? Your father shall reside with us—I will be a son to him; and never, never shall you have cause to repent realising the only dream of happiness I ever formed!"

"Do not ask me, Charles!" exclaimed the poor girl, bursting into tears. "I cannot, dare not—it would be wrong! I foresaw this: it is a sad trial for us both!"

"For me it is indeed a trial!" observed her suitor, in a tone of the deepest anguish. "Oh, Therese! unsay those cruel words! The home I offer you I know will be less worthy of you than Stephen Franklin's: he is rich and I am poor; but then you would have no mother-in-law to remind you that her son took a portionless wife: you will be its mistress, and I your slave—your happy slave!"

"Stephen Franklin?" repeated his listener.

"I know it is for him that I am rejected!" exclaimed her lover, passionately interrupting her. "God! I never felt the bitter curse of poverty till now!" The poor fellow pulled his hat closely over his brows, to hide the mute witness of the agony he felt ashamed of giving way to in her presence.

"You wrong me, Charles!" she said, at the same time gently laying her hand upon his arm; "he you name has no more to do with my determination than if I had never seen him! It proceeds," she added, after a pause, "from a far different cause!"

"I have been slandered to you!" exclaimed the organist; "some one has spoken evil words against me—and——"

"Should I listen to slander!" demanded Therese. "Slander—and against you, whom I have known from childhood—whose heart contains no more mystery than a flower; you, whom I have loved—loved as a brother!" she added, with a deep blush. "I thought you knew me better, Charles!"

"You love another, then?" observed the young man, mournfully.

"I do not think I shall ever love!" replied the maiden; "at least not in the sense you mean—or ever become a wife! My life must be devoted to my poor blind father! Remember he has but one child left to sustain and to console him—how desolate would the world be to him, deprived of her! Forget this dream!" she added, in a tone of the deepest sadness; "for it is but a dream! You are young, and God has gifted you with genius. In the world you will soon find one whose love will repay you for this first blight of your hopes!"

"Never!" groaned the young man, greatly moved; "never—never! Heaven has but one sun—earth one Therese! Mine is not a heart to change—to know a second love! You were its first choice—you will be its last!"

"Not so!" said the poor girl, trying to force a smile; "time will efface these vain, because useless regrets! You will learn to think of me as a dear friend—a sister! Then with what pleasure shall we not meet again—talk of old times—the merry days of our childhood—and laugh—laugh together, Charles—at the idle dreams of our youth!"

The tone of affected lightness in which Therese commenced her reply to the passionate declaration of the young musician, changed as she proceeded; the struggle was more than nature could sustain: bursting into tears, she seated herself at the foot of the stile, in the middle of the pathway, and wept—those only who have loved can judge how bitterly.

The organist was perplexed—he knew not what to think. The recollection of the slanderous reports which had been circulated in the village respecting both the sisters struck him for an instant with a painful doubt: it was but for an instant—his generous heart as quickly dismissed it.

"There is some mystery which I cannot fathom!" he said. "You are kind, yet cruel at the same instant! Perhaps," he added, "your father objects to me on account of my poverty? I know he has the right to expect a richer son-in-law!"

"My father, Charles, has never spoken with me on the subject!"

"Your refusal of me, then, proceeds from your own free will?"

"Yes!"

The fatal word was uttered in a tone as low and sad as the plaintive cry of a wounded ringdove.

"I will not reproach you, Therese," exclaimed the young man, after a pause, "that you once gave me reason to think I was not quite indifferent to you! You were the mistress of my heart—I gave it freely, and you had a right to sport with it!"

"I did not mean to do so!" sobbed the daughter of the adjutant; "indeed I did not! Oh, forgive me, Charles! Judge me not harshly—deprive me not, in my misery, of the only consolation left—your friendship!"

"And what consolation have you left me?" demanded her lover; "a life of sorrow—a blighted, lonely existence! But, as you say, I am young, and can endure the agony of disappointment—the weary wil-

tude—the apathy of resignation! Farewell, Therese! God bless you! May you never feel a pang like mine, and should you bless another with your love, may his heart prove as true, as devoted, as the one you have broken!"

He turned and left her.

"It has fallen upon me!" murmured the maiden; "the trial I foresaw has arrived at last! God give me strength to support it! Good, generous Charles!" she added, with a burst of sorrow; "never will I repay your love by bringing shame to your honest hearth! Better to part as now we part, than live to see you regret the confidence you have placed in me! Were I your wife, coldness or a doubt would kill me!"

She alluded, doubtless, to the rumors which she well knew were afloat respecting her daily visits to the cottage where the innocent orphan of her dead sister was at nurse—reports which she lived in hourly dread might reach her father's ear. This was the terror which haunted her. Should he question her, what could she reply? Her answer must be tears and silence—her promise to Fanny on her death-bed left her no other choice.

On her return to the cottage, she found Dr. Bennet had called in: the benevolent physician took a kind interest in the father as well as daughter.

"Out so late?" he said, taking her by the hand; "this is wrong, Therese! You must be careful of your health—you are not strong yet!"

"Exercise will do me good, sir!"

"But not in the night-air!" observed the adjutant, in a tone of dissatisfaction; "surely your morning walks might satisfy you! There can be no longer need of your toiling as you do—our debts are nearly all paid! What can you want with money?"

Therese looked at the doctor. He knew that a portion of her weekly earnings went to pay for the support of her orphan niece.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, struck by a sudden idea; "a friend of mine has placed his motherless infant at a nurse in Farnsfield! Now Therese is fond of children—the occupation would amuse her; suppose she took charge of it! To be sure five-and-twenty pounds a-year is not a very large sum; but every little helps!"

"Five-and-twenty pounds a-year!" mentally repeated the astonished girl. Alas! where was such a sum to come from?

"What say you?" continued the physician; "my friend will only be too happy to know that his infant is placed in such excellent care!"

Therese made a sign to him. The doctor *only nodded to her encouragingly.*

"The very thing!" exclaimed the blind old soldier. "What say you, Therese? Will it not be much better than sitting hour after hour at your needle? By-the-bye," he added, "what is the name of the child?"

"Fanny—Fanny Needham!" replied the visitor.

A tear stole down the cheek of the bereaved father on hearing a name which reminded him of his lost child. He felt a sudden interest in the little innocent, and almost insisted upon Therese—who sat pale as death during the conversation—undertaking the charge of it.

"Leave all the arrangements to me!" said the doctor; "I will settle with its nurse, and bring the child to you in the morning! How very fortunate I thought of the arrangement! Bless me!" he added, looking at his watch; "eleven o'clock! Good night!"

Shaking hands with his host, the benevolent man rose and left the room. Therese followed him, to see him—as she said——to the gate of the little garden in front of the cottage.

"What have you done, my dear sir?" she whispered; "I shall never be able, now that I have no longer an excuse for working at my needle, to procure half the sum you name!"

"It is not necessary you should do so!" replied Dr. Bennet. "I will provide it!"

"You, sir?"

"Yes!" he continued; "it is time that I explained a circumstance of which you appear to be ignorant! I first heard that your sister was likely to become a mother from Edward Trevanian."

"From him?"

"In our last interview he placed the sum of five hundred pounds in my hands, telling me that it was the fruits of his savings during his minority—out of the allowance, I presume, which Sir Richard made him. His request was, that I would apply it for the benefit of poor Fanny and her infant."

"He, then," exclaimed Therese, in a tone of mingled indignation and surprise, "was the father of her child! So good and noble as he appeared, too! A seducer, on the verge of the grave!"

"I cannot answer that doubt," continued the physician; "for it is one even to myself! He certainly spoke of your sister with great affection, but not more so than ——in fact, I know not what to think! The Trevanians have ever been a singular race, and Edward not the least so of his family. If I have hitherto permitted you to toil and support the orphan," he added, "it was that I felt a motive to exertion was necessary to rouse you—to reconcile you to existence. It might have been a mistake, but it was at least a kind one—and

nobly have you answered to my expectation!"

Long and anxiously did Therese reflect that night on the important step which had been taken, and the clue which she had gained to the birth of her niece—for that Edward was her father she no longer doubted—everything appeared to confirm it. The information which he had been the first to impart to Dr. Bennet, that Fanny was on the point of becoming a mother—the provision, slender as it was, which he had made for the child.

Never had her trust in human nature been so shaken. "If he was thus selfish and cruel," she thought, "where could confidence and honor in man be looked for?"

The following day the orphan was placed under her care, the physician paying the adjutant the stipulated sum a year in advance. It was a moment of painful satisfaction to Therese when she saw the little innocent in the arms of its unconscious grandfather, who first became attracted to it from its name of Fanny. Her dead sister, she fondly thought, looked down and smiled on the reunion of all she had left and loved on earth.

The addition to the inmates of the cottage, as might be expected, gave rise to fresh rumors and reports in Farnsfield.—They reached the ears of Mrs. Franklin, who repeated them to her son, with such comments as suited her purpose. The consequence was, that for several weeks, much to her satisfaction, the young man discontinued his visits.

From the Franklins the tale of scandal reached the hall. Lady Trevanian became alarmed—for circumstances had occurred since the death of her step-son which filled her mind with painful doubts. Sir Richard had discovered, on his visit to London, that the large funded property, together with the accumulations of Edward's minority, had been drawn from the banker's. At first he was inclined to pronounce the power of attorney by which the transfer had been made a forgery; but there was no mistaking the signature: *it was undoubtedly that of his son*, and dated on the 1st of September—the day he came of age and the day of his untimely death.

The disappointment was a bitter one both to her ladyship and her husband. Lady Trevanian determined, after having heard the report of the housekeeper, to send for Dr. Bennet. He had placed the infant at nurse—she had discovered that—and naturally concluded he must know the name of *both* its parents. Like a prudent strategist, she determined to try the effect of cajolery, and if that failed, *to threaten the worthy physician with her displeasure.*

She little knew the firm mind she had to deal with.

"Ah, doctor!" she exclaimed, as he entered the drawing room; "this is a very sad affair!"

"Is Sir Richard ill?" inquired the physician.

'No—he is never ill!" replied the lady, pettishly. "His nerves are of steel—and yet I wonder how he bears it! Mine are dreadfully shaken! So young and yet so wicked—on the verge of the grave, too!"

Her visitor took a seat, and waited patiently till her ladyship should condescend to explain the nature of the dreadful affair to which she so pathetically alluded, and who had been so young and so wicked. Not but he partially guessed the point at which she was aiming at; for he had more than once contradicted the idle rumors in Farnsfield, which were secretly undermining the health and good name of poor Therese.

"You do not answer me?" observed the artful woman, impatiently.

"Really, Lady Trevanian, not being aware of the object on which I presume you wish to consult me, I should be puzzled to do so! Like most men who are devoted to science, I am a very plain, matter-of-fact sort of personage! You must speak clearly, if you wish to obtain either advice or opinion from me!"

"I *will* speak plainly, since you require it!" exclaimed her ladyship, haughtily. "I believe, Dr. Bennet, that for many years you have been the medical attendant of my family?"

"I have long had that honor!" he replied.

"How comes it, then," continued the angry woman, "that you connive at the dishonor of that family?—for gross immorality," she added, "is dishonor—no matter how exalted the station of him who descends to it!"

"Really I cannot comprehend your ladyship!" said Dr. Bennet. "The groom whose arm Master Walter broke in a fit of passion a week since is going on well enough! Surely you do not mean to reproach me with that?"

"I do not allude to that!" hastily interrupted the weak, doating mother. "I am sure, dear boy, he regretted it enough—and the fellow was insolent, lazy, or something of that kind—I forget exactly which! What I allude to is the child which that artful hussy, Therese Graham, had by my step-son Edward!"

The physician smiled.

"You know it to be the truth!" added the speaker emphatically. "His visits were daily!"

"On my honor, Lady Trevanian, I neither

know nor believe in any such absurdity!" replied her visitor. "Perhaps," he added, fixing his eyes upon her, "he found there the kindness and sympathy denied him in his home?"

Her ladyship colored deeply, but had too much tact to reply to the implied censure on the conduct of herself and children.

"Consider," he continued, with increased firmness—for the error she had fallen into with respect to Therese, instead of Fanny—which error, *par parenthese*, was shared by all the lovers of scandal in Farnsfield—rendered his negation easy to his conscience—"the improbability, not to say the absurdity, of such a suspicion: for the last four years of his life, Edward knew that he was dying!"

"Can you deny that this Therese is the mother of the child I allude to!" said the still incredulous woman.

"Most solemnly!" replied Dr. Bennet, with a cheerful countenance; "and no one knows the falsehood of the report which the malignity of the gossips and old maids of Farnsfield has set afloat better than myself—for I attended the mother at its birth!"

"Her name?" demanded her ladyship.

The physician remained silent.

"The name of its father?" she added; "at least you may tell me that!"

"I cannot answer you, Lady Trevanian! First, because I have only a suspicion of his name, and, secondly, that were it as familiar to me as my own, it would be a point of honor with me to conceal it! Physicians are like confessors!" he added; "they are sometimes the confidants of strange secrets; and, for the honor of my profession, I am proud to say they seldom betray them!"

"When *paid* to keep them!" observed the disappointed woman, sarcastically.

Dr. Bennet rose with great dignity, and, taking his hat and cane, advanced towards the door.

"My life, and the character which I have borne for forty years, Lady Trevanian, are the best replies to your unjust insinuation! Good morning!"

So saying, he left the drawing-room.

Although considerably affected by the interview, the benevolent man did not quit the hall without visiting his patient, the poor groom, whose arm had been brutally broken by Walter Trevanian. He found the lad suffering from fever and excitement, but in other respects going on as favorably as he could wish.

"Thank heaven you are come, sir!" exclaimed the boy; "I always feel better after seeing you! Do you think," he added, *looking earnestly into* his face, "that I may *quit this place?*"

"How quit it?"

"Go home!" replied his patient, "I can't stay here! I am not happy!" he added, with a shudder.

"Surely Sir Richard has not discharged you?" observed the doctor.

"No—no! they don't want me to leave—but I will!" added the groom. "Master Walter offered to double my wages, but it wor all of no use!"

The physician saw that his patient had something on his mind, and, with his knowledge of the human heart, he easily obtained his confidence.

"Well, then," said the lad, "I will tell you; but mind you don't repeat it till after I am gone—and then I don't care who hears it! The night that the young squire died, I heard the old hands talking in the servant's-hall how that the great bell always struck of itself when any one of the master's family wor about to die!"

"Surely you do not believe in such folly?" observed the physician.

"No more than you do, doctor!" replied the lad; "but *it did strike*, for all that—and I know who made it!"

"Who?"

"Master Walter," whispered the groom; "I saw him creep up the old tower stairs—at first I couldn't make out what he wor at; but I followed him, and saw him swing the clapper against the side of the bell—then hold it in both his hands, to prevent its striking again—for it is said only to toll once, you know!"

"And what could be his motive for such a piece of folly?"

"Motive!" repeated the patient; "I did not expect such a question from you, of all men in the world, sir! Do you think," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper, "*that Master Edward did'nt hear it*—that he didn't know the old story of what the bell wor supposed to strike for—*that it didn't cause his poor heart to break?*"

The cold calculation—the fiendlike motive of the act—struck Doctor Bennet instantly; what its effect must have been upon Edward he shuddered to think.

"Infamous!" he exclaimed.

"Worn't it, doctor! It wor for telling him of it that Master Walter broke my arm! I know why he did it—he wanted to be Sir Richard's heir, and was too impatient to wait; but it will never do him any good, even if he lives to get it!"

"Never!" added the physician emphatically.

"And now, since I have told you all, you don't wonder that I wish to leave this place?"

"Not in the least, my boy!" replied the benevolent man; "and if you will give me

your name I will do my best to procure you another situation."

"Tom Tanner, sir!"

The gentleman wrote it down in his pocket-book, and, promising the poor fellow that he would not forget him, took his leave.

"Poor murdered boy!" he murmured, as he crossed the park on his way back to Farnsfield; "the fatal aneurism was first brought on by the harsh treatment he was subjected to in his youth! The heartless young ruffian!" he added, alluding to Walter Trevanian, "had not even the excuse of ignorance; for I repeatedly told both him and his father that the slightest shock or emotion at any time might cause the artery to burst!"

Whether such had been its effects or not upon Edward, can never be known. The doctor's way home lay through the churchyard, where he found the sexton, Mike, plying his trade: the old man was a favorite with him—he liked his quaint sayings, his snatches of old ballads and veneration for the past.

"Well, Mike!" he said, stopping for a moment to chat with him; "still busy?"

"Yes, sir!" replied the sexton, looking up from the grave he had more than half dug, and leaning on his spade; "thank goodness, we have both plenty of work to do! I am glad—very glad—to see you!" added the speaker; "indeed I had been thinking of making so bold as to call upon your honor."

"Are you ill?" inquired the physician; "if so, it cannot be anything very serious—for I never saw you looking better! But call up at the surgery—a little medicine will soon put all right!"

"No! no! no!" exclaimed the gravedigger, shaking his head with a very peculiar expression; "I don't want anything of *that* kind—the earth is my doctor! I can't tell you how the smell of it revives me as I turn it over and over year after year! It's my belief I know every shovelful in the churchyard! But no matter for that," he added; "it's something I've got upon my mind that I want to consult you about!"

"Had you not better consult the clergyman?" suggested the gentleman—who at that particular moment felt little inclination to listen to one of Mike's usually long-winded stories.

"No!" replied the old man doubtfully; "the rector be a sort of cousin to Sir Richard—and it wouldn't do to tell him! Besides," he added, "I have more confidence in you, doctor—I have known you these forty years; and, though I never take your physic myself," he added, with a smile, "*I always recommend you!* I won't keep you long."

Dr. Bennet patiently seated himself upon one of the nearest tombstones, to listen to Mike's tale. Great was his astonishment as it proceeded. The sexton, with greater prolixity than we can venture to inflict upon our readers, related the circumstances of three visitors inquiring their way to the Trevanian Arms, on the night of the young squire's death—his own visit there—and the appearance which had so terrified him in the park.

"Imagination will do a great deal," observed his auditor, when he had finished, "the three strangers who inquired their way I can readily believe—but the rest is so wild, so improbable, that——perhaps you had been drinking?"

"Sober as your honor is at this moment!" replied Mike. "Besides, imagination could not have played Stephen Franklin, Mark Thornton, and three or four more of the lads, the same trick!"

"Did they, too, see the appearance you describe?" inquired the physician.

"As plainly as I did!" said the old man. "It walked so stately along, with its hand upon its heart, as if holding it!"

The doctor appeared struck by the description.

"Have you related this to any one?" he inquired.

"You be the first!"

"And if you are wise," observed the gentleman, "you will let me be the last! Sir Richard would be highly displeased at such a report becoming general in the place! Few would believe you! The baronet, you well know, is implacable when offended!"

"That's the reason why Stephen and the rest of the lads, who were out poaching—I don't mind telling you—have kept the secret!" said the sexton; "we always speak of it when we meet together; but it ain't about keeping our own counsel," added Mike; "I have lived long enough in the world to know the advantage of that! What I want is, to hear your opinion—your *real opinion*—of the matter!"

Now this was the very thing the gentleman did not choose to give.

"It is a mooted point," he replied, "whether the spirits of the dead ever are permitted to return to earth! Antiquity and history are both in favor of the supposition that they do! I need not remind you of the witch of Endor?"

"No, no! I have read of her in the Bible!"

"Or the spirit which it is said appeared to Brutus just before the Battle of Philippi—in fact," added the speaker, "it is one of those questions so evenly balanced in the human mind, that in nine cases out of ten

we are guided by our impressions rather than our reason!"

The sexton seized his spade and began to dig. The doctor saw that he was dissatisfied with his answer.

"Do you comprehend what I have said?" he added.

"No!" replied the old man. "*Do you?* I wanted to know what you thought about the matter, and you talk to me about the witch of Endor—though that be all right enough, seeing it is written in the Bible—and *Philip Brutus*—what has he to do wi' it?"

"Not much, I confess, Mike!" replied the physician, good-humoredly. "I must reflect upon the point; in the meantime remember my caution, lest your tongue should bring yourself and your friends into a scrape!"

So saying, he rose from his seat upon the tombstone, and resumed his walk towards the village.

"A pleasant gentleman!" muttered Mike, looking after him; "but he won't speak all he thinks!"

With this conclusion he resumed his labor.

CHAPTER VII.

Saw you the sun, obscured at noon,
  Burst thro' the mist and fiercer blaze?
Saw ye at eve the clouded moon
  Shine out and shed its placid rays?
Oh, thus shall truth's eternal beam
  O'ercome foul falsehood's venomed shroud,
And thus shall lovely virtue gleam
  Thro' calumny's malignant cloud. ANON.

THE indignant denial of a man so universally respected as Dr. Bennet, that Therese was the mother of the child whose appearance at the cottage of the adjutant had set in motion the tongues of the gossips of Farnsfield, not only shook the doubts of Lady Trevanian, but went far to repress the rumors so generally credited.

Stephen Franklin was the first to be convinced of their falsehood—not so his mother; she had set her mind against his marrying the daughter of the blind beggar—as she contemptuously styled the poor blind soldier—and, right or wrong, she was determined to credit them.

Stephen knew by experience that it was of little use to argue with her; for although possessed of some good qualities, Mrs. Franklin never adhered so tenaciously to an opinion as when any one had taken the trouble to demonstrate its utter absurdity; *so he* resolved to break his mind to his *father—a very quiet personage*, who seldom interfered in the affairs of the family; but when he did, his decisions were conclusive; even his wife submitted to them—no mean proof of his tact and judgment.

The old gentleman was seated on a bank in one of his corn-fields, watching the rising crops that with dreamy, complacent air, which bespeaks a mind at ease with the world, when the young man first broached the subject, commencing, as is usual in such cases, with duty, affection, and the necessity of his one day establishing himself in the world, as his father had done before him.

It is astonishing how seldom lovers are intelligible—their conversation is generally a compound of moonshine and hieroglyphics. Had Stephen's request been for a horse, a new gun, or even permission to visit London, he would have spoken his meaning plainly at once.

"Establish theeself, Steve!" repeated the farmer, after having gone through the laborious process of unravelling his speech; "what does 'ee mean, lad—thee beest well enough here? Hast got into another scrape wi' Sir Richard's keepers?"

"No, father—no!" replied his son, hastily; "I have not been out since the first of last September—and don't care," he added, with a shudder at the recollection of the fright he had received on the occasion, "if I never handle a gun again! I have given up shooting!"

"Glad to hear it, boy!" replied the old man, who on more than one occasion had had to open his purse-strings pretty widely in order to screen his son from the consequences of his passionate love for field sports; "not but there be worse things than shooting a hare or a pheasant! I can't see why, if they come and eat my corn, they ain't as much mine as Sir Richard's! But Parliament knows best! What wor'ee speaking about?" he added; "thee wor so confused, loike, that it be clean gone out of my head!"

This time Stephen contrived to express his wishes and feelings so intelligibly that the farmer could not possibly mistake them. His father listened attentively, and pursed his brows—a constant habit with him when debating any point, or driving a bargain; hitherto he had looked upon his son as a mere boy, and was about to tell him so, till he suddenly recollected that he was turned four-and-twenty.

"Marriage, Steve," he observed, at last, "is a very serious thing! We don't know half its trials," he added, with a sigh, "till we are over head and ears in them!"

"You married my mother, sir," urged the young man, "when you were only three-and-twenty!"

"Perhaps it was not the wisest thing I

ever did," observed his parent, drily; "not that I have any cause to complain of her—she has been a good wife and mother!"

"Both, sir!" dutifully added his son.

"What does she say to it—eh?"

This was a poser. Stephen knew that although his father had a will of his own, yet he seldom chose to exert it; his wife's influence over him was, generally speaking, paramount; perhaps it was from habit, or from a naturally apathetic temperament, which the old man shook off only on very important occasions.

"She does not approve of it, I am sorry to say, sir!"

The farmer gave an articulate "Humph," and appeared to be weighing what could be the cause of her objection in his own mind. He raised his eyes at last, and, fixing them with an earnest gaze upon those of his son, pronounced the monosyllable,

"Why?"

"Because evil tongues have traduced her, father!" exclaimed Stephen Franklin, eagerly; "and my mother, I regret to say, has lent but too willing an ear to them!"

"Likely—likely!" replied the farmer; "she wor always fond of a bit of gossip! Who be the lass?"

"Therese Moore!"

"She be a good girl!" observed the old man, emphatically; "she ha' worked hard for her poor blind father, who, bating he is a little shy and proud, is as pleasant a man to smoke a pipe with as any in Farnsfield! Now I know," he added, with a sudden gleam of recollection, "what Dr. Bennet wor a talking to dame about, three days since! I came in from the long croft unexpectedly, and heard him say that she wor wrong to speak an ill word of the best girl in all Farnsfield. Had I known it had been Therese, I would ha' put a spoke in the wheel, too!"

"Then you consent?" said his son eagerly.

"That be a very different matter!" answered his parent, deliberately, although he had secretly made up his mind to give his consent—for his pride was tickled at the idea of his son marrying into the family of a gentleman—even though a poor one—and so pretty a girl, too.

Stephen pleaded very earnestly, assured his father that his happiness depended on Therese becoming his wife—promised to attend more than he had ever done to the farm—to give up racing, shooting, and every kind of sport; in short, drew such a picture of domestic felicity—the two families being under one roof, grandchildren to love him, a daughter-in-law to watch over his comforts—that the old man could hold out no longer.

"Bring her home when thee will, lad!" he exclaimed; "and God bless 'ee both!"

"You consent, father?"

"There is my hand upon it!" said the farmer; "no man can say old Franklin ever flew from his word—and he ain't a goin' to begin the practice with his own son!"

Stephen wrung it over and over again. Never had his heart beat so lightly as at that moment. Had not the sense of the ridiculous restrained him, he would have danced for joy; the recollections of his mother also assisted to sober him.

"Perhaps," he said, in a hesitating manner, "it would be better, dad, if you were to break it to her!"

"Thank'ee, Stephen," answered his father, drily; "but don't 'ee think it would come more dutiful loike, from thee? *I'll come in when the first shock be over*, and—thee knowest what I mean—for after all, she be a good mother, and loves thee dearly!"

"I were indeed ungrateful to deny it!" replied Stephen Franklin, warmly; "never had man kinder or better parents! Therese, I am certain, will love them like her own! By the bye, dad," he continued, in a coaxing tone—for he only called him father upon very serious occasions—"don't you think it would be as well if you were to call upon the adjutant?"

"Maybe it would!"

"And don't say anything about his daughter not having any fortune!" added the young man; "poor people, you know, are sometimes very proud and sensitive!"

"Not a word!" said the old man; "they be likely to hear enough o' that from thee mother—women will talk! I suppose it be a part of their nature, and they can't help it, if they would! At least," he added, philosophically, "I know of one that can't!"

His son was too dutiful to inquire the name of the one he alluded to—the probability is, he guessed.

Great was the indignation of Mrs. Franklin, when Stephen informed her that he had obtained the consent of his father to his marriage with Therese. To be compelled, after all, to receive for a daughter-in-law the girl whose good name she had labored so hard to destroy, was wormwood to her; the possibility of her refusing such a match as her son never once entered her imagination.

"And thee father has promised thee?" she said, after a long and not very successful struggle to appear calm.

"Gave me his hand upon it, mother!"

"Then he be a fool, Stephen, and you ——"

"Add but your blessing," continued the young man, not heeding her observation—

which, had the angry woman been permitted to conclude it, might have turned out even less complimentary to himself—and I shall be the happiest fellow in Farnsfield!"

"Thee doesn't want my blessing, Stephen!" muttered the dame, sullenly; "thee hast wheedled thee father out of his, and that is enough—mine, *of course*, is of no consequence!"

Then, with a feeling that she was an exceedingly ill-used personage, and vague hints about a certain corner in Farnsfield churchyard, where the Franklins for many generations had been buried, the old lady threw herself into a chair, burst into tears, and sobbed bitterly. Unfortunately, it was not the bitterness of grief, but of passion.

"Mother!" exclaimed the young man, deeply moved—for he loved her, despite her inconsistencies and waywardness—"prove to me that Therese is unworthy of being the wife of an honest man, and I will forego this marriage! You are silent—you know that it is not in your power to do so! Dr. Bennet told you, in my father's presence, only a few days since, that you had slandered one of the best girls in the village—and he knows more than any one else respecting her! Be just, at least!" he said, throwing his arms around her neck; "the happiness of your son—your only one—depends upon you; for you know me too well to suppose that I can be happy if you are not so!"

At this moment old Mr. Franklin, who shrewdly suspected that his assistance might be desirable, entered the little parlor in the farm-house, where the above conversation had taken place.

Seeing his wife in her easy chair, and her son with his arms round her neck, he concluded that it was all a settled affair.

"So it be over!" he said.

Mrs. Franklin looked up at the sound of her husband's voice; there was something very warlike in her eyes, but the imploring looks of Stephen restrained her.

"Dame," continued the farmer, "I shall want my red waistcoat and the suit wi' the silver buttons! Thee knows the one I mean—for I wor married in it! I be going to call on an old neighbor to-morrow!"

"Very well!" answered his wife drily.

"Thee hads't better come with me!" continued her husband; "dang it, but I should like to see thee again in the dove-colored silk that mother bought thee! People said it wor too fine—for we were not so well off then as we are now!"

Mrs. Franklin, like many ladies when invited to go where they have not a mind to *by their husbands*, had a hundred things to *do. The dairy had to be scoured out*, and, as a matter of course, she had not a bonnet fit to be seen in—though the fashion was far less variable in those ever-changing articles of female attire than at the present day.

"Pooh!" exclaimed her husband, good-humoredly; "the dairy can wait—every one knows that it be the best kept in all the parish; and as for bonnet—it wor good enough to go to church in last Sunday!"

Stephen added his entreaties to his father's persuasions, and Mrs. Franklin at last reluctantly promised that she would go. Since it had come to the push, it was not, after all, so much her objection to the match, as the ridiculous figure it would cause her to make in the eyes of her neighbors, to whom she had all along declared such an event impossible.

Stephen, however, was determined not to wait till the following day before he made his visit. He resolved to see the object of his choice that very evening, and learn his fate from her at once—for up to the present hour he had never declared to Therese his love. True, his attentions had been constant, but she had permitted rather than received them; and the poor girl, even if she suspected his feelings towards her, could scarcely have explained herself otherwise than she did—by coldness.

To have acted otherwise might have appeared like vanity or coquetry—two of the qualities most foreign to her heart.

"Kiss me, mother!" said Stephen Franklin, as he was about to start for the village; "wish me success!"

"There be little doubt of that!" answered the old farmer's wife proudly; "such chances don't knock at her door every day! But since it must be, bless thee, Stephen, and may she make thee a good wife!"

"She is sure to make a good one, mother!" replied the young man, "let who will have her!"

So saying, full of hope and confidence, he started on his way.

It was a lovely evening when the wooer reached the cottage. The old adjutant was walking in the garden, with the infant Fanny in his arms, unconscious of the nearness of the tie which united them. Therese, most opportunely, was seated in the little parlor, at her work.

"Good evening, Stephen!" she said, raising her eyes as he entered the room; "you appear very cheerful!"

"Can you not guess the cause?" he replied.

The animated tone and ardent gaze of her admirer covered the cheeks of the maiden with blushes. She guessed the purport of his visit.

"I see that you do understand me!" he

continued; "and yet I scarcely know how to proceed! It is the first time I ever spoke in the accents of love to any woman—that is, seriously; but I do love you! My father is willing—nay, anxious—to receive you as his child! Say that you will be mine! I do not speak of the comfort, the advantage of a home like mine—for they would never weigh with you: but my heart, Therese, is devoted to you—truly, passionately, and sincerely! Say but the word—one little word—and I shall go hence the happiest of earth's beings!"

"I am grateful to you, Stephen!" replied the maiden, wtihout the least hesitation or want of firmness in her voice, such as had marked her rejection of Charles Graham; "it is an offer of which any girl might be proud—for it is the highest compliment a man can pay to her character and principles; but I never can be your wife!"

The young farmer appeared thunderstruck; but, to do him justice, it was his feelings more than his vanity that were wounded.

"Is it possible," he exclaimed, "that you love another?"

"It needs not that," answered Therese, evasively, "to justity my resolution—for it is one! I will never enter any man's family to cause discord between him and the authors of his being!"

"But my father consents—nay, desires the match!"

"*And your mother?*" said the poor girl. "Oh, Stephen, you know, as well as I do, how perseveringly she has slandered me! I am aware of your generous defence, on more than one occasion, of my name and character—for which I respect you—esteem you as a brother; but while a doubt remains on the mind of any one, I will never be a wife! The suspicions of the world I can bear," she added; "although they pain me deeply; but the doubt of my husband would kill me!"

"I do not doubt you!" interrupted the young man, imploringly. "My mother is convinced, and repents her fatal error! She is coming in the morning, with my father, to visit you! Therese—Therese—recal this cruel determination, which almost deprives me of reason! Reflect, not on the advantages, but on the devotion of the heart I offer! Will you break it?"

He attempted to clasp her hand; she gently, but firmly disengaged it.

"Let us not prolong an interview," she said, "which must be distressing to us both! Heaven knows that I would not willingly inflict pain; but, Stephen, I can never be your wife! Think you I have not marked your hesitations and suspicions—marked them *with pain—for I felt* towards you as to a brother? No!" she added, proudly: "the man to whom I give my hand must never have entertained a doubt of the purity and value of the gift!"

"I never did—by heavens! or if I did, it was but for an instant!" exclaimed her admirer passionately. "Oh, Therese! did you know the agony it cost me—how continually the lie—the odious lie—was dinned into my ears that you had fallen, you should pardon and pity me!"

"Pardon you—willingly!" observed the daughter of the adjutant; "and esteem you as a brother still!"

"Only as a brother?" said Stephen Franklin. "What has not my folly lost!"

"But little!" answered Therese, mournfully; "and you will soon forget the disappointment—heaven forbid that it should long dwell either upon your heart or mind! Let us continue friends," she added; "friendship has one advantage over love—if it fades, it fades as the flower of the field, leaving only a sweet memory behind!"

She extended her hand to him as she rose to quit the room.

"Therese, is—is this irrevocable? Can no entreaty—no time or proof—change your decision?"

"None! It is irrevocable—it would be unkindness to deceive you!"

With these words, she stepped from the little parlor, and joined her father in the garden. The blind soldier could not see the tears which were still trembling upon the long silken fringes of her eyelids as she drew near, but her voice struck him.

"Something has happened!" he observed.

"Nothing, dear father! at least, nothing of any consequence!"

"Where is Stephen?" he inquired.

"Gone. That is, I believe so!"

"Therese, my child!" exclaimed the old man, "you have rejected him—do not attempt to conceal it from me—rejected him on my account! You would not separate from your afflicted father! God bless you, my dear child!" he added; "and reward you for the generous sacrifice!"

"It was no sacrifice!"

The adjutant, however, thought otherwise, and from that day evinced greater tenderness than ever for his remaining daughter.

Poor Stephen hurried from the cottage more like a madman than a reasonable being, and directed his steps towards the farm. Therese's rejection of him, he felt assured, arose from the sense of his mother's injustice towards her; and he felt it doubly hard that his own parent should be the cause of his misery.

Mr. and Mrs. Franklin were sitting at the tea-table, quietly talking over the pro-

passed change, when their son entered the room and flung himself into a chair.

"What be the matter, Steve?" demanded his astonished father.

The heart of Mrs. Franklin began to reproach her—she almost divined the cause.

"She has refused me!" exclaimed the young man.

"Refused thee?" repeated his mother.

"Yes—and your calumny has caused it! She declares she will never be the wife of a man whose parent has done everything in her power to blast her reputation! Good-bye, father!" he added, wildly; "I cannot remain here—my heart is breaking! God bless you! It's not your fault—not yours!"

"Stephen!" almost shrieked the terrified woman, alarmed at the despair of her darling son, "remain with us! I will see Therese, beg her forgiveness, kneel to her!" she added; "but do not—do not desert the mother who bore you in her age, or the father who loves you, for one hasty word!"

"My father!" faltered the young man, grasping the farmer's hand; "no—no! I must not break his heart!"

He sank back into the chair, and hid his face in his hands. The aged couple remained silently watching him: he was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER VIII.

Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand,
For lifting food to it? SHAKSPEARE.

No motives less powerful than the strong affection which Mrs. Franklin bore her son, and the alarm she felt at his despair, could have induced that gossipping, scandal-loving personage to subdue the struggles of pride, and humble herself, as she considered it, by a visit to the cottage of the blind old adjutant, where she doubted not her presence and condescension would speedily set everything to rights between Stephen and Therese. The idea of the girl's refusal of him arising from any other cause than the one assigned never for an instant entered her imagination.

When a reluctant consent to the marriage was first wrung from the weak-minded woman, she consoled herself by anticipating the freezing reception she would give her future daughter-in-law—the petty tyranny, the numerous mortifications she would inflict. Her rage at having to make the first advances to the penniless girl—as she contemptuously styled her—and at being reduced to solicit her to forget the past and become the wife of her son—for whom she considered the richest match in Farnsfield scarcely good enough—may be more easily imagined than described: gall and wormwood were nothing in comparison to it—it blistered her very heart.

"What will Miss Standish, the rector's sister, say? What will Mrs. Shark and her daughters think?" muttered the dame to herself, as, in no very amiable humor, she walked briskly along the footpath through the corn-fields leading from the farm to the village. "After all my boasting, too! they will never believe that I could be so weak!"

More than once, as these and similar reflections pressed upon her, she wavered in her resolution, and felt disposed to turn back; but the recollection of her husband's anger and Stephen's despair urged her to proceed. The former, it is possible, she might have gained courage to brave—in fact, she had done so more than once during her wedded life; but not the latter. She pictured to herself her desolate hearth—the cheerless winter nights—the tediousness of the long summer days, should her son abandon his home, as he had threatened.

That was a misfortune to be averted at any sacrifice—so she resolutely continued her way to the cottage.

Therese was busily occupied in her little chamber, placing fresh flowers in the window, when Mary Page entered the room, to announce the arrival of a visitor: her mistress saw in an instant, from the triumphant smile of the old nurse and knowing shake of her head, that it was some one whose presence she thought would afford her pleasure.

"And who do you suppose it is, miss?" she demanded, with an air of intense satisfaction.

"Really I cannot tell, Page!" was the reply; "perhaps ——"

The speaker was about to pronounce the name of the young organist, but checked herself with an involuntary sigh. Charles Graham had not called once at the cottage since the evening she had rejected him.

"No it is not *him!*" replied the faithful creature, who read what was passing in the heart of Therese; "it is Mrs. Franklin!"

"Mrs. Franklin!" repeated her young mistress, with surprise.

"Yes, miss! The fine lady who fancies herself too good for any company except the rector's sister, and Lawyer Shark's family! I thought her pride would get a tumble! I told her you were dressing, but I dare say would receive her in a few minutes. Let me get your black silk frock with the crape trimmings, and ——"

"I must not keep Mrs. Franklin wait-

ing!" interrupted the daughter of the adjutant, with a faint smile at the anxiety of her nurse that her appearance should be suitable to what she doubtless considered a very important occasion; "this dress will do very well!"

"*She* is dressed out in her silks!" observed Page in a tone of mortification.

"She is rich, and I am poor. Besides, you forget I am at home!"

"True, miss!" said the nurse, trying to look satisfied—for she never contradicted her young mistress; "after all, it don't much signify; though I should have liked —— But you of course know best—anything is good enough to receive the likes of her in!"

Therese descended at once to the little parlor, where she found her visitor seated in her father's easy chair by the window which opened into the garden in front of the cottage. As the old servant had observed, Mrs. Franklin was in her best. Over her dove-colored silk, which had been her wedding-dress, she wore one of those cloaks known to the grandmothers of the present generation by the name of cardinals: it was edged with a row of very deep lace, and had a small hood at the back—intended more for show than use, since it never could been drawn over the large, round bonnet, trimmed with flaming cherry-colored ribbons, which two gold pins fastened on her head: not but the aforesaid bonnet had strings, only it was not the fashion to tie them—they were intended to stream behind.

A pair of black silk mittens, drawn half way up her plump, ruddy arms, completed the dress of the farmer's wife.

Therese, on the contrary, wore only her usual morning dress of black camlet, which fitted tightly to her figure, and displayed its graceful proportions to advantage.

Prejudiced as she was against her, Mrs. Franklin could not help mentally acknowledging, as she entered the room, that she had never seen a more beautiful creature, and regretted, probably for the first time in her life, that she had indulged in her innate propensity for scandal, and sided with her detractors.

"Well, child!" she exclaimed, in that artificial tone which indicates a mind ill at ease, at the same time accompanying her words with an important toss of the head; "you did not expect to see me here, I suppose?"

"Your visit, madam, certainly was unexpected!" quietly answered Therese.

"I thought so!" continued her visitor, annoyed without knowing exactly why, at the well-bred ease of Therese, which rendered her own embarrassment the more *painful; "but I have always* been a good-natured creature, and could never find the heart to refuse Steve anything he desired So I just called to say that I don't believe a word of the ill-natured things people report about you; that I never have believed them, and never will; and—and—that's all!"

"And yet you repeated them!" observed the poor girl, calmly.

Mrs. Franklin colored to the very temples, partly from anger, partly from shame. She had expected to find Therese overwhelmed at her condescension; her self-possession mortified her. She was vexed that she could not imitate it.

"Repeated them," continued the speaker, "to the injury of a poor, motherless girl, who had never offended you; whose only inheritance was her good name! Repeated them, although you knew they were false—for Dr. Bennet on more than one occasion vindicated my innocence in your presence! Had they reached my blind old father's ears," she added, "I tremble to think of the misery and desolation they might have caused—for, though poor, he has the pride of a gentleman and a soldier."

"Well—well!" muttered the dame—for her patience at being thus schooled, as she considered it, was nearly at an end—"perhaps it was a little thoughtless!"

"Thoughtless!" exclaimed Therese, indignantly. "Had you taken my life, the world would have considered it murder, and the laws have punished you! You rob me of that which is the ornament of life—my good name—and call it thoughtless!"

"And if I did," said Mrs. Franklin angrily, "I came to make it up with you—to tell you that I had given my consent to Stephen's marriage—that I was not only willing, but *anxious* to receive you as my daughter-in-law!"

The word "anxious" nearly choked the irascible old woman, as the recollection of her son's threat of abandoning the farm extorted it from her.

"I thank you for your good opinion!" replied Therese, calmly; "it is perhaps the only reparation you can make me; but I can never be the wife of Stephen Franklin!"

Never in the course of her life had the purse-proud woman been so overwhelmed with surprise and mortification. The idea of her son being refused by a penniless girl—after her condescension, too—was incomprehensible to her.

"Not have him!" she exclaimed. "Is the girl mad? Why there is not another such match in Farnsfield! The Misses Shark have been pulling caps for him these three years! They have two thousand pounds apiece—and yet he prefers you, who

have not as many pence! Not have him! Why the lease of the home farm has thirty years to run! Farmer and I have no other child! Everything will be his when we die!"

"I respect Stephen much!" answered the adjutant's daughter; "for, despite his levity of manner, I believe his heart is uncorrupted; but I can never be his wife!"

"And why not?" demanded her visitor, pale with rage and mortified vanity.

"Simply because I do not love him! But that is no reason," she added, alarmed at the malignant expression of Mrs. Franklin's countenance, "why we should not continue friends!"

"Stephen is not fine gentleman enough for you, I suppose!" exclaimed the disappointed messenger. "Nothing less than the young squire, or his officer friend would suit you! As if either of them meant honestly by you—a likely story, indeed!"

Therese sighed. Her thoughts were with her sister.

"Ay, you may well sigh!" continued the malicious woman. "I was a fool for my condescension, and Stephen a still greater fool for ever demeaning himself to think of you?"

"I never sought his attentions!" observed the poor girl, alarmed lest her father should return from his walk and overhear the conversation.

"Sought!" repeated the dame. "Marry come up! I should think not!"

"As this interview can only be painful to us both, Mrs. Franklin," said Therese, "permit me to put an end to it! That you regret the injustice you have done me is a source of satisfaction to me—for I would not wish to stand ill in the opinion of the meanest of my fellow-creatures! I forgive you—forgive you freely!"

"Vastly condescending!" interrupted the farmer's wife, in a sarcastic tone.

"As for Stephen," she continued, "much as I respect him for his kindness of heart, my resolution is irrevocable! I can never be his wife!"

"Then I'll take care you never shall!" exclaimed Mrs. Franklin, now thoroughly exasperated at what she considered the pride and insolence of the speaker. "If Steve has a particle of his mother's spirit, he will never think of you after this! As to the reports," she added, "I believe them all—every one of them—and shall take care to repeat them wherever I go! And what is more, miss, I'll prove them—prove them!" she repeated, striking the floor with her walking-stick; "if money and perseverance can ferret the truth out!"

So saying, she flounced out of the parlor *without a word of adieu,* and hurried through the little garden with an air of determination which boded ill for the future peace of her victim, who observed with terror that instead of taking the footpath over the cornfields which led to the farm, the angry woman directed her steps towards the common, at the extremity of which stood the cottage of Nell Bryce, the nurse, from whose care the orphan Fanny had so lately been removed.

"The storm is gathering round me!" murmured Therese, as she sank despairingly back upon her seat; "I have roused the persevering enmity of one who will henceforth show no mercy! Should the rumor reach my father's ears, he will curse me! Sister sister!" she added, mentally, "little did you dream how fatally the promise you extorted would recoil on my own helpless, unprotected head!"

It was in vain that the poor girl endeavored, by plying her needle or attending to the household duties, to dissipate the forebodings which oppressed her: they clung to her like her shadow, and for the first time she regretted the imprudent promise she had given the dying Fanny. The more she reflected on its probable consequences, the greater was her agitation, till she gradually fell into such a nervous, excitable state, that she trembled at the sound of every footstep.

"Would Dr. Bennet were here!" she said, clasping her hands in terror; "he at least might advise or console me!"

Unfortunately the sudden death of a very near relative had called the benevolent physician to London, and his return was not expected for several days.

The first person who made his appearance at the cottage was Stephen Franklin: the young farmer came full of hope, not doubting that the reconciliation between his mother and Therese had removed the only bar to his happiness. Little did he suspect that the interview had rendered the barrier between them more complete.

His smile of confidence speedily vanished when his eyes fell upon the pale, agitated countenance of Therese.

"In heaven's name, what has happened?" he demanded, taking her unresisting hand.

"Nothing!" replied the adjutant's daughter, repressing her tears.

"My mother has been with you?"

"Yes."

"And yet you weep, Therese?" observed the young man, mournfully; "these are not tears of joy! Can it be possible that——but no—no! My mother never could have added insult to injury, and broken her promise to me!"

"I believe she came with far different intentions!" replied the agitated girl; "but I spoke to her truthfully, Stephen—not re-

proachfully! I told her that I felt grateful for the preference you had shown me, but that I never could become your wife!"

"So resentful still, Therese!"

"Not resentful, Stephen—for how can I feel resentfully towards you, who have ever been kind—almost like a brother to me! I do not think that I shall ever marry!" she added; "but if I do, my heart must accompany my hand!"

"And that is another's?"

"I never said so!"

"I know it is!" exclaimed the young farmer, passionately; "it is that beggarly organist who has robbed me of your affections—you cannot deny it! I have seen you blush when his name has been pronounced—start when you heard his footstep approaching the cottage, or the sound of his voice in the garden! Love has sharp eyes, Therese—and mine are not easily blinded! Why you blush and tremble, even now!" he added.

"It is at your injustice, then!" observed Therese.

"Still you cannot deny that you love him?"

"You have no right to ask me such a question!" observed the maiden; "and yet it could be easily answered! Had I wished it, long ere this I might have been his wife!"

"And you refused him?" eagerly demanded the young man, at the same time endeavouring to take her hand. "Bless you, Therese—bless you for those words! They have relieved my heart of its worst pang—jealousy! Did you know the torment I endured every time I met him here—how my heart beat as I watched you both—he gazing upon you with eyes of passionate tenderness—you all consciousness, timidity, and blushes! The very sound of his voice betrayed the nature of his feelings towards you—for it trembled whenever he addressed you!"

Had Stephen Franklin possessed a more profound knowledge of the human heart, he would have felt how unwisely he was acting in recalling to the mind of Therese the devoted tenderness of his rival; but jealousy, with all its cunning, is sometimes blind: the only point, perhaps, in which it resembles justice.

"Consider your cruel rejection of me!" he continued; "or tell me, at least, how I have offended—why you reject me?"

"Because she is unworthy of you!" replied a sharp voice near them.

He turned at the unexpected sound, and beheld Mrs. Franklin, who had entered the parlor unperceived, and overheard the last part of her son's speech. The countenance of the scandal loving dame expressed the most triumphant satisfaction, as she eyed the object of her hate with a half-mocking, ironical smile.

"Mother!" exclaimed the young man, in a deprecating tone, "is this your promise?"

"It was given," said the old woman, "when I was weak enough to believe that, despite appearances, she might still be worthy of you! But now I have the proofs!"

"Proofs!" repeated Stephen: "no—no! I will not believe it! You have been deceived by some well-forged tale—for you are both simple and credulous, mother! From her own lips only can I credit that Therese is no longer worthy of me! Speak!" he continued, addressing the terrified girl, who, pale as death, sat immoveable on her chair; "refute this slander!"

"Slander!" repeated Mrs. Franklin; "was not the child, which every one says is the very image of her, born in this house? Let her deny it if she can!"

Therese made no reply.

"Look at her!" continued the angry woman; "she is conscience-stricken! I tell you it was born here! Nell Bryce told me, that every day, almost as soon as it was light, my fine madam found the way to her cottage, and would pass hours in weeping and praying over it! I tell you, Stephen," added his mother, "that she is a guilty thing, and with my consent shall never darken my doors!"

A deep groan was heard in the passage, and the next instant the blind old soldier—who had been in the adjoining room, and heard the cruel denunciations of the speaker—made his appearance in the midst of them. His countenance was not merely agitated—it was convulsed by passion—by the sense of wounded pride and outraged honor. His sightless eyeballs rolled fearfully, as he turned them towards the spot where half-suppressed sobs and sighs denoted his daughter was sitting.

"Answer me!" he said, sternly; "am I a childless man? Therese, is the accusation of this babbling woman true? Was the infant whose presence has given rise to these reports really born beneath this roof?"

"Father!"

"Yes or no!" demanded the old man, in a voice of thunder. "She does not answer me!" he repeated, wildly; "thank heaven her angel sister has at least been spared this shame! Who is the villain," he added, "who has abused the confidence of a sightless man—polluted his roof, stained his name? Let me know, that I may curse him!"

Every trace of color fled from the cheeks of Therese—her lips were white as marble; she crept rather than walked to the spot where her father was standing, and,

falling on her knees, endeavored to take his hand; he snatched it from her as if a serpent had stung it.

Convinced by the humiliating position of the poor girl that his mother for once had spoken the truth, Stephen Franklin rushed from the house—he could not bear to witness the degradation of the being whom he still passionately loved.

"Cruel woman!" murmured Therese, turning her eyes reproachfully upon the farmer's wife; "you know not what you have done!"

"My duty!" exclaimed the malicious woman in a tone of satisfaction. "I am really very sorry for you, Mr. Graham—but—"

"Begone!" exclaimed the adjutant in a tone of contempt; "the abode of a sorrow like mine is not fitting for the prying eyes of vulgar curiosity, the sneers of affected pity! Respect my grey hairs, my misery and shame! Leave us together!"

There was something so commanding in the gesture of the incensed father, as he pointed to the door, that for once even Mrs. Franklin felt awed. She left the cottage, casting a look of intense satisfaction upon the victim of her passion as she disappeared.

"My child!" murmured the old adjutant, "whom I was so proud of—whose hand I thought would close my eyes when death summoned me to rejoin her mother and sister in a better world—whose love was my last stay on earth—and now——"

"Who loves you still!" whispered Therese. "Oh, father! indeed, indeed I have not merited this shame!"

"Not merited it!" repeated her parent: "was the story of that woman false! Was the infant born beneath this roof? Were your morning visits really paid to the cottage of the hag she named, to weep and pray?"

What could the unhappy creature reply? Every word was truth. She answered him only with her tears.

"Speak!" added he, wildly, as a terrible suspicion flashed athwart his brain; "*which am I to curse for this dishonor—the living or the dead?*"

The trial was indeed a fearful one. Therese, who dearly loved her father, could, as our readers are well aware, have cleared herself by a single word; but her lips were unfortunately sealed by her promise to her sister—a promise upon which Death had set his seal, rendering it doubly sacred.

"Answer me! am I to rejoice that I have still a daughter? Am I to curse the memory of——"

"Bless her, father!" shrieked the distracted girl, clinging to his feet; "profane not the grave of the child who loved you! *Never shall my lips pronounce* one word to cast shame upon the memory of my sister!"

"Wretch!" replied her father, after a pause; "it is to you, then, I owe this infamy? Begone! Leave the roof you have dishonored—the father you have betrayed—who loved and trusted you—whose grave you have dug! Hence from my presence, and bear with you my malediction!"

It was in vain that his daughter clung to him, and, in the most heart-rending accents, imploring him not to curse her. The wrath of the old man was not to be appeased—in his despair he tore the thin locks of silvery hair from his brow and scattered them over her, breathing the most terrible maledictions.

"Be cursed, here and hereafter!" he exclaimed; "may the child you have borne sting you like the serpent's brood; may she smile over your untimely grave! Leave me," he added, "to my sightless misery—to my shame and misery—to die alone. Quit my roof, and for ever!"

With these fearful words he rushed from the room, leaving his daughter crushed and overwhelmed by the weight of his bitter maledictions.

When she recovered from the temporary state of insensibility into which the terrible scene she had passed through had thrown her, Therese found herself supported in the arms of the faithful old domestic, Mary Page; the affectionate creature had been her nurse from her infancy, and loved her with the tenderness of a second mother.

"Do not weep!" she sobbed, her own tears falling fast the while; "I will see my poor, deceived, cruel master! I am not bound by any promise—he shall hear the truth from me!"

"No—no!" faltered her foster-child; "the truth would kill him: he lives but in the memory of my sister! Promise me," she added, faintly, "whether I live or die, you will not betray this fatal secret?"

It was some time before her entreaties could prevail upon her nurse—who felt indignant at the cruelty she had been treated with—to forego her determination of revealing everything to her deceived, unhappy parent.

"Well," said the old woman, reluctantly yielding the point; "on one condition I will hold my tongue! It will be a difficult task—but I promise!"

"Name it!" replied Therese, eagerly.

"That, go where you will, I go with you! I cannot consent that you should quit your father's roof alone! I will not be a burthen to you!" she added, anticipating the objections of her young mistress; "I am strong, and able to work for us both, and am not without money: it was gained

in the service of your dear mother and her children—so I only give you back your own!"

It was in vain that Therese entreated of her not to quit her father. "Who else would attend to his wants?" she asked, "if you desert him?" Mary Page was inflexible.

"He should have thought of that," she said, "before he drove you from his roof! Little does he know the heart he has destroyed! He never loved you as he ought!" she added, her indignation increasing every moment; "your sister was always his favorite!"

The poor girl kissed her affectionately.

"She deserved his love!" she whispered.

"And have not you deserved it?" replied the aged domestic; "have you not worked for him day and night, like a good, dutiful child, as you are—toiled till my heart has ached to see you? He will live to repent his injustice and cruelty; his remorse will exceed his anger when he learns——"

"He must never learn it!" interrupted Therese; "the discovery would kill him—he loved Fanny so dearly! It is hard—very hard," she added, "to be driven in disgrace from the home of my childhood—my name given to the sport of malicious tongues—sent forth, like Cain, with a curse upon my brow!"

The convulsive shudder which shook her frame proved how deeply the unmerited malediction had affected her.

"But I will keep my promise," continued Therese, "although it break my heart! Poor Fanny! it was a bitter legacy you left me!"

It was arranged that during the rest of the day her young mistress should remain in the room of the nurse, who, meanwhile, was to seek a lodging in the village to which they might remove that very night, with the innocent cause of so much sorrow. As for the adjutant, directly on quitting the parlor where the distressing scene we have described had taken place, he had locked himself in his chamber, which he continued to pace, a prey to the most violent emotions of anger and outraged honor.

Mary Page was one of those energetic characters who only require to know their duty, resolutely to perform it. She arranged with the widow at whose cottage Charles Graham had lodged previous to his quitting Farnsfield, for a couple of rooms, paid her a month's rent in advance, and returned to Therese, to prepare for their departure.

"We will not go till dusk!" said the faithful creature; "day would blush to see you driven like a criminal from your father's house! The news has been spread all over the village by that malicious woman! Heaven, perhaps, will one day requite her for her wickedness to you!"

There was both calculation and wisdom in thus making known to Therese the full measure of her misfortune. The malediction of her father had so completely overwhelmed her that she scarcely felt anything else; had she had time to recover from the shock of the first blow, the second must have crushed her.

It was late before the adjutant quitted his chamber and entered the parlor, where his evening meal had been prepared for him. There was a wearying sense of loneliness in the old man's heart as he sat listlessly by the table, leaving the food untouched; even Mary Page began to pity him.

"You had better eat something, sir!" she said, in her usual quiet tone.

He uttered a deep sigh, and a tear trickled down his withered cheek.

"This is a sad change!" continued the domestic; "the place will be very lonely when poor Miss Therese——"

"Do not name her!" interrupted her master, with a shudder; "the ingrate has broken my heart!"

"Her own is broken, poor, innocent lamb!"

"Innocent!" repeated the adjutant, contemptuously.

"Ay, innocent, sir!" replied the old woman. "I know the meaning of the word, and the truth of what I am saying; but of course you will not listen to me! You never would when I used to tell you how unjust you were in preferring one child to another! You can listen to your anger now!"

"Leave me!" exclaimed her master, impatiently.

"It is what I intend to do, sir!" replied Mary Page.

Of course the adjutant intended merely that she should quit the room: he had not the least idea of parting with a person whose services were so necessary to him. His first impulse was to ask the cause of such an unexpected resolution; but the suspicion that Therese had urged her to take it, in the hope of changing his resolution, restrained him.

"Very well!" he said; "when you please! She will not move me!"

"I never expected she would!" answered the woman, drily; "*for your heart, master, is darker than your sight!* She failed to move me when she cried and prayed to me—her nurse, her servant—not to abandon you in your solitude and sorrow; but I had made up my mind to do it: I don't forget my promise!"

"Promise?"

"Yes! Promise, sir! I told my poor dear mistress, when she was dying, that I would be a mother to her child—that I would watch over her! I have done so; and will, please God!" she added fervently. "She shall have some one to comfort her in her misery! But I'll look in now and then, just to see how you are getting on, and lend a hand—for I pity quite as much as I blame you!"

"You are right!" said the adjutant, after a pause. "It is only just that you should not abandon the wretched girl your weakness has screened!"

At the words "wretched girl" and "weakness," Mary Page bit her lips in silence. Oh, how she longed to tell the deceived and obstinate man, the bitter, mortifying truth that it was his dear idol Fanny, and not Therese, who had disgraced him; but her promise to the latter restrained her.

"I shall leave everything tidy before I quit you," she observed, "and will drop in in the morning, to see how you are getting on! I have sent for Nancy Shalders, the charwoman: she knows the house and your ways better than a stranger, and——"

"I shall not need her!" interrupted the old man, hastily; then suddenly recollecting himself, he added: "Yes, yes—that will do for the present!"

He rose from his seat and returned once more to his chamber, leaving the repast upon the table untasted!

It was almost midnight when poor Therese left the cottage where she had spent the happy hours of her childhood. Her heart was almost broken. Long and fervently did she pray at the door of her stern parent's room: she heard his restless step as he paced the floor—for he had not retired to rest—his sighs and groans of anguish. Poor girl! she would have given worlds to have said, "Father, God bless you!" but the terror of his curse was on her. She trembled lest the sound of her voice should renew his fury and draw repeated maledictions on her devoted head.

"Bless him, Father of all!" she gently murmured; "bless him, and sustain the poor, blind man under the load of his afflictions—for they are heavy! Pour the balm of thy consolation into his wounded heart—soften it towards his child! Should she be taken from him, be Thou the prop of his age, his stay, and hope!"

Leaning on the arm of her nurse, she tottered rather than walked from the house, and that same hour took up her abode in the cottage so long inhabited by the young organist.

Faithful to her promise, Mary Page visited the cottage of her late master, to see everything arranged as usual: to her surprise, he was absent. When she returned the following day, it was locked up. The adjutant had disposed of the furniture to the landlord, in payment of his arrears of rent, and left Farnsfield by the coach for London.

It was a sad blow for Therese when she heard the news.

CHAPTER IX.

It is a compact signed and sealed in ill—
Ill will come of it; heaven doth avenge
The broken trust which robs the orphan's bread,
And in its own good time pays back the dead
With most usurious interest. OLD PLAY.

THE sudden disappearance of her father from his cottage was a sad blow to the broken spirits of Therese, who pined under his malediction, although reason and conscience both assured her it was unmerited. Poor girl! it was a sad legacy she had inherited from her sister; a helpless orphan to toil and struggle for, and a fatal promise which had blighted her existence in its freshest bloom.

The discovery could not have taken place at a more unfortunate moment, owing to the absence of the benevolent physician. Had Dr. Bennet been in Farnsfield, she would, at least, have had some one to advise and console her; or, as she fondly imagined, to have contrived some way to satisfy the doubts of the adjutant, without compromising either his living child or the memory of the dead.

Therese was sitting one evening, after she had been about a week an inhabitant of her new abode, pondering in melancholy mood over the past and future. The infant cause of all her sorrow was quietly sleeping in its cradle by her side, when Mary Page came bustling into the room.

"Have you heard the news?" inquired the faithful creature.

Her young mistress looked up inquiringly.

"The rector is dead!" continued the speaker; "and, they say in the village, without having made the least provision for his sister, who is now as poor as we are!"

"Heaven help her, then!" replied Therese, in accents of pity; "it will be a sad change for her—for she is no longer young and able to work!"

"Heaven has punished her," exclaimed the nurse, "for her pride and wickedness to you! She had never a kind word for

the poor, and now poverty has fallen upon her!"

"I can forgive her!"

"It is more than I can!" observed her humble friend; "but for hers and Mrs. Franklin's evil tongues, things would have gone on smoothly enough! As for the lawyer's girls, no one pays attention to what they say—their evil report is no slander! I trust," she added, bitterly, "I shall yet live to see her in a woolen gown of her own spinning, instead of her silks and satins!"

The intelligence proved but too true. Dr. Standish had expired in an attack of apoplexy, leaving his affairs in great confusion. He was one of those churchmen who live up to their incomes, keeping open house—not for the needy, but the rich; greedy and exacting of his dues from the poor—ostentatiously extravagant to his equals. He was little loved whilst living; and even less regretted when dead.

"I have better news even than that!" continued the speaker.

"*Better!* Oh, Mary—Mary!" interrupted Therese, reprovingly, "you are too good to rejoice at the death of a fellow-creature!"

"Rejoice! well—no—not exactly that!" muttered the domestic. "I am not so glad that Dr. Standish is dead as that his sister is reduced to poverty: and that I do rejoice at, and will rejoice at!" she added, warmly. "She deserves it, for her evil, slanderous reports of you! She has broken my poor deceived old master's heart, and yours, and mine, and all our hearts, although not one of us ever injured her!"

As it was one of those points on which it was impossible to reason with her—for Mary Page was governed in her opinions far more by her heart than her head—her young mistress changed the subject and inquired what the good news was which she had brought from the village.

"Dr. Bennet is expected back every hour!" replied the nurse; "he will soon find out what has become of my poor master, I warrant me! I have something else!" she added, with a smile; "Charles Graham is in Farnsfield!"

"Have you seen him?" demanded Therese.

"No—but I heard him, as I crossed the green, playing on the organ in the church. I could not help stopping to listen. Poor fellow! the music sounded so mournfully that it brought the tears into my eyes! There is no one can play like him—and so all the people say! I do wonder, miss, that you could refuse him! There, don't be angry with me—I know I ought not to speak so familiarly to you—who are a lady, and I only a poor ignorant servant! But it is your own fault as much as mine," she added, "if I sometimes forget myself, for you were always so kind and affectionate to your poor nurse!"

"You did not tell him that I was living here?"

"No, miss!" answered Mary Page; "I trust I know my duty to you better than that! It was not for you to appear to make up to the likes of him!"

In the love and pride she felt in her foster-child, the speaker forgot the interest she really felt for the young organist.

"Right, Mary!" said Therese; "you were quite right—it is better that we should never meet again!"

Mary Page thought otherwise. Although love had long ceased to trouble the peaceful current of her existence, she had not forgotten the time when she was young; and the mournful tone in which her young mistress declared that it was better she and Charles should never meet again betrayed that it was not without a pang she had arrived at such a conclusion.

To avoid receiving any directions from Therese to prevent an interview, the faithful creature left the room. As she entered the kitchen, she heard the voice of the organist conversing with his former landlady, the mistress of the cottage.

"Here is Mrs. Page," said the woman; "she can inform you."

The young man eagerly advanced towards his old acquaintance, and inquired after Therese.

"I have only just heard of the affliction and sorrow," he said, "which have overwhelmed her!"

"And the disgrace!" added the nurse, in an anxious tone—for she felt anxious to ascertain the opinion which the speaker entertained of her dear mistress.

"There can be no disgrace without guilt!" he replied, warmly; "and if an angel were to accuse her of that, I should disbelieve it! Do you think she will see me?"

"Why not? Are you [illegible] of her oldest friends?"

Mary Page pointed to the door of the little parlor, adding, that he knew the way well enough.

Still it was not without considerable hesitation that the anxious lover ventured into the presence of the girl who had rejected him.

"Don't be angry, Therese?" he said, as he gently closed the door after him: "do not drive me from your presence! I heard that you were unhappy—unfortunate—and I came to offer you the consolation of a friend—a brother—to ask you once more to share the humble home of the man who

adores you—whose life it is in your power to make a blank or sunshine!"

Therese looked up with surprise; her heart was deeply moved by so much confidence and faith.

"And you have heard——"

"Everything!" he exclaimed; your father's cruelty and injustice!"

The poor girl silently pointed to the cradle in which the innocent cause of her affliction was still calmly sleeping.

Charles Graham turned ghastly pale.

"It is not yours, Therese!" he said; "or, if yours, you are a wife! I know the purity of your heart and mind—for I have watched you from infancy—no thought of vice ere sullied them! There is some mystery—but mystery does not always imply guilt! What it is I seek not to fathom—and yet I would give worlds to know! If there be indeed a barrier between us, Therese—if you are another's—a word—a look—a sign—and, though my heart breaks, I will offend your ears no more!"

"I am not a wife!" replied the daughter of the adjutant, deeply moved.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the young man, fervently; "then I may still love you without sin! You may still be mine!"

"My name—my fair name, Charles!" interrupted the poor girl, in a tone of the deepest affliction, "is blighted! My father has thrust me from his door! The world cries shame upon me! Those who once loved me, shun me! Think you I would bring disgrace upon one [illegible]noble as yourself?"

"Disgrace!" he repeated, falling at her feet; "bliss unutterable! Why should we heed the world's opinions? Our hearts shall be our world, and we will listen to no other voice! Therese, I renew my offer! I implore you to accept it! Let me be the husband of your sorrows! They will grow lighter by being shared—a father to that innocent child in whom you take so deep an interest! And never—never," he added, emphatically, "shall a suspicion wrong your purity a[illegible]th!. If I die before the mystery is s[illegible] Therese, it will be as I have lived—wit[illegible]bounded confidence in both!"

During the latter portion of the interview between the lovers, Dr. Bennet—who had heard, on his arrival in Farnsfield, of the misfortunes of his *protegee*—entered the room, and stood a silent spectator of the conflict between love and what Therese considered her duty.

"No, Charles—no!" sh[illegible]: "dearly as I love you—and i[illegible]time my lips have confessed a[illegible] cannot bring my heart to accept so vast a sacrifice! The world would blame—you in time regret—and it must not be! No—no! the loss of your esteem would kill me!"

"You will never lose it!" observed the physician, advancing and taking her by the hand; "these scruples betray the sensitive delicacy of a soul to which guilt is a stranger!"

"Plead for me, sir!" exclaimed Charles Graham; "she will not resist your counsel!"

It was some time before the slandered girl could bring herself to yield to the entreaties of her lover and the advice of her only friend. She did, however, at last cede to them, and silently placed her hand in that of the young organist.

"Bless you!" he exclaimed, clasping her to his heart! "My own true, noble-hearted Therese! Never shall you regret the choice you have made! My life shall prove my gratitude for such a gift!"

"Prize it, young man!" said Dr. Bennet, solemnly. "Had I a son, I should have been proud to have seen him the husband of Therese!"

It was a happy hour for all at the cottage. Mary Page blessed her foresight in admitting Charles to see her mistress, and calculated that, with her marriage, the evil reports which had been so industriously spread would cease.

It is true that they did cease from that very day—but not because Therese was married. We must not, however, anticipate the incidents of our story.

Two days after the death of Doctor Standish, the Rev. Jabez Knowles waited on Sir Richard Trevanian, to remind him of a promise which had been held out to him, when he first undertook the charge of Edward, of succeeding the late rector in the living of Farnsfield. The baronet received him coolly, and, when his visitor alluded to the presentation, was seized with one of those convenient fits of absence of memory which often serve great men to evade the fulfilment of their promises.

"Is it possible, my dear sir!" he exclaimed, in a tone of well-affected surprise; "did you say that I positively promised?"

"At least, Sir Richard, the promise was implied!"

"I am very glad it was not expressed!" observed the baronet, carelessly; "since it leads me to hope you misunderstood me! I should have been sorry to have broken my word and disappointed you!"

"Disappointed me!" repeated the Reverend Jabez Knowles, with a bitter scowl; "you surely cannot mean to act so unhandsomely, after ——"

He paused: his conscience probably checked him in the plea he was about to urge.

"After what?" demanded Sir Richard, fixing his eye upon him.

"Nothing—that is, after the care I took of your late son—I fulfilled my promise to the very letter!"

"Strange that I should not recollect it!" said the patron of the living, musingly. "Have you any memorandum in my handwriting—we frequently corresponded whilst I was in Italy—to recall it to my mind?"

The speaker well knew that he had not—for few men were more careful than he was how they committed themselves upon paper.

"Between gentlemen," replied his visitor, tartly—for he saw that all hope of the preferment he had so long counted upon was gone—"I did not think it necessary!"

"Between whom?" said the baronet, in a freezing tone.

The Reverend Jabez Knowles repeated his observation.

"Ah, between gentlemen! Thank you! I did not catch the word! Good morning, my dear sir! I have three more livings in my gift—the two Collinghams and Poclington—and one day, perhaps—but mind, I make no promise—for really my memory is very treacherous!"

The enraged schoolmaster saw that he was taunting him, and, for the first time, perhaps, in his life, bitterly regretted the inhuman manner in which he had treated the unfortunate boy committed to his care—for there was little doubt that the aneurism which terminated the life of Edward Trevanian had been occasioned by the fearful excitement he had been subjected to in childhood.

Sir Richard rose from his easy chair and rang the bell for the footman to open the door for his visitor, who bit his thumb as he left the room.

It was a bad sign when the Reverend Jabez Knowles bit his thumb: to his pupils it threatened a thrashing—to those whom he could not thrash, something even more menacing.

"Farnsfield for him!" said the baronet, as soon as he was alone. "A pretty idea! why, the presentation is worth five thousand pounds, at the least! I should like to see the man who would wheedle me out of it for a shilling less!"

The servant entered, with a card upon a salver, which he handed to his master.

"Whose is it?" inquired Sir Richard, carelessly—for he felt in no humor to be disturbed by a second visitor.

"Mr. Amberwell!" said the footman, reading the card.

"Not at home!" replied his master; "I know no Amberwell! What can the fellow want!"

The man left the room, but presently returned with a slip of paper, upon which was written, in a very neat hand, the following words:

"One of the three gentlemen who drew from the Bank of England the large sum accumulated during the minority of your late son, requests the honor of a few moments' conversation. He gives you five minutes to decide!"

"Certainly! Admit him instantly! How could you be so stupid as not to know that I was at home!" exclaimed Sir Richard Trevanian to the astonished domestic, who hastened from the library to usher in the extraordinary visitor.

"So," continued the baronet, "I shall obtain a clue to the mystery at last! I never could understand how Edward contrived to execute a power of attorney on the day he became of age! I never left him till he retired to sleep—that sleep from which he never more awoke! I must act with vigor," he added; "for the fellow must feel pretty confident to venture into my presence!"

The speaker had made up his mind to receive his visitor with the dignity of a judge—to awe him by the display of his rank—to threaten and be dictatorial, in the hope of bending him to his views—though what those views were, beyond the recovery, if possible, of the money, he could scarcely define to himself.

The calculations of the baronet were completely upset the instant he beheld the stranger who had announced himself in so singular a manner: he was evidently a thorough-bred man of the world—smooth as oil, polished as steel, and quite as highly tempered.

Involuntarily Sir Richard rose to receive him, and pointed to a chair.

Mr. Amberwell took it quietly, without waiting for the master of the house to reseat himself.

"Cool!" thought the baronet.

"Puzzled!" mentally observed the visitor.

"May I observe, Sir Richard," he said, speaking aloud, "that my request was to see you alone!"

The footman, on a sign from his master, quitted the room.

"Are we secure from interruption?" continued Mr. Amberwell.

"Perfectly, unless I ring!"

"Perhaps you had better fasten the door!"

The baronet hesitated.

"The communication I have to make," added his singular visitor, "is important!"

Sir Richard hesitated no longer, but, rising from his seat, he turned the key in the library door.

"Now, sir," he said, "that we are alone,

as you desired, and secure from all interruption, may I request to know the purport of your visit? I do not generally receive strangers, but——"

"You felt too anxious to ascertain the nature of my business to stand upon ceremony!" observed the gentleman; "and you were quite right—for the fortunes of the house of Trevanian hang on your decision!"

"How?"

Mr. Amberwell drew off his glove, and took from his pocket a cambric handkerchief, which must have cost at least a guinea a yard—wiped his lips—displaying, as he did so, a magnificent diamond upon a very delicate, lady-like, white hand—and, pointing to the baronet to resume his seat, commenced explaining the purport of his visit.

CHAPTER X.

Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain [passion.
Which are too intrinse to unloose—smooth every
That in the natures of their lords rebel;
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods.
SHAKSPEARE.

"WHAT have I to learn?" demanded Sir Richard Trevanian, evidently much annoyed at the cool, provoking self-possession of his visitor.

"Much, both of the past and future, which it concerns the interests of yourself and family to know; but first permit me to introduce myself more formally than I have hitherto done; I am the Rev. Onias Amberwell!"

At the announcement that the speaker was a clergyman, somehow or other the thoughts of the baronet immediately reverted to the living of Farnsfield, which he had not yet disposed of. It is astonishing how fine a hair will serve a man of the world as a clue.

"I am the brother-in-law of General Maitland, and consequently the uncle of George, your late son's most intimate friend! Friend, did I say?" continued the speaker; "they were more like brothers! Never did I behold so perfect an union of heart and feeling as existed between them!"

"You knew my son, then?" observed Sir Richard.

The gentleman explained that he had been a visitor for two days at the hall, during the tenancy of General Maitland, whose family, he added, were plunged in the greatest distress by the unaccountable disappearance of his nephew, whom they had traced as far as London after his departure from Farnsfield. "Whatever the cause," continued the Rev. Onias Amberwell, "it has been the poor boy's ruin—his absence from his regiment having been reported to the Horse Guards, and his commission cancelled."

It was some consolation to Sir Richard Trevanian to hear that the prospects of the man whom he most hated and feared in the world had been so completely blighted.

"I presume," he said, in the tone of a man unjustly suspected, "that neither your brother-in-law nor his family really imagine that I am in any way accountable for the conduct of a young man who certainly was anything but an agreeable visitor at my house—who——"

"Certainly not!" interrupted the reverend gentleman, hastily; "such a suspicion, I can answer for it, never crossed *their minds!*"

"Or yours?"

His visitor gave a slight cough, and observed that, with the baronet's permission, he would explain the purport of his visit in his own way.

Sir Richard bowed stiffly, and begged him to proceed.

"About a week before the death of the late Edward Trevanian, resumed the uncle of George Maitland, "I received a singular letter from him, entreating me to come privately, on the 1st of September—*the day he became of age*—and meet him at midnight, at the little inn or beer-house kept by his nurse, directly opposite the park gate! As a matter of course, I complied with his request, and found, to my surprise, that two other persons had been summoned, in the same mysterious manner, to meet him at the same hour!"

"May I ask their names?"

"Certainly: one was a distant connection of the Maitland family—a Captain Harrington; the other, Mr. Foster, the lawyer of the Middle Temple."

At the name of the lawyer the countenance of the baronet changed—for he knew him not only as a man of the highest integrity and honor, but as the legal adviser of the first Lady Trevanian's father—in fact, he had been employed to draw the marriage settlements.

"The circumstances you relate," he observed, after a pause, "are certainly very singular; and had not my poor boy's death prevented his keeping the appointment ——"

"*It did not prevent it!*" said the Reverend Onias Amberwell, in the same bland tone of voice he had spoken in throughout their interview, "*He was there!*"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Sir Richard, starting from his chair; "I cannot believe

it—I will not believe it! During the day I scarcely quitted him for an instant; I had a suspicion that——no matter. Late in the evening he complained of a violent pain at his heart, and retired to his room—he was in bed by eleven!"

"And by twelve at the Trevanian Arms," added his visitor; "my rank, character, and position in the world will guarantee in any court of justice in England the truth of my assertion, should you do me the injustice to suspect it! Besides, Foster and Harrington were present as well as myself."

The unnatural parent gnashed his teeth with rage and disappointment—for he felt convinced that his secret wishes and calculations were frustrated.

"He was mad!" he muttered; "the fool was mad!"

"I fear you would find it difficult to prove that he was so!" replied the gentleman; "my evidence, as well as that of those who saw him, would decidedly oppose such a supposition! He was as calm and collected as——"

"The serpent when it unfolds its coils," exclaimed the baronet, "and prepares to sting!"

"He certainly *did sting you*," quietly observed his visitor, "when he executed the power of attorney which authorized us to withdraw the accumulations of his minority from the bank, and invest them in our own names in trust!"

"For whom, in the fiend's name?" exclaimed the baronet.

"George Maitland and his heirs! I assure you," added the speaker, "that I really felt for your disappointment—for, if I mistake not, you have another son?"

"And a daughter," added Sir Richard; "a beautiful, amiable girl, whom he has deprived of fortune!"

"By the present Lady Trevanian?"

"Of course!"

The Rev. Onias Amberwell received the information with ill-concealed satisfaction, which the father of the young lady was puzzled to account for—not supposing that his having a daughter could in any way interest him; but he did not know the sleek, plausible gentleman he had to deal with yet.

"Sad as the disappointment at losing so large a sum," continued the narrator, "must naturally be, I fear it is not the last blow which the hatred of Edward Trevanian for his family is destined to inflict!"

"What mean you!"

"He executed a second deed!"

"A will?" gasped the avaricious parent.

"I presume so!" answered the gentleman, coolly; "*but cannot* assert it positively, since I merely witnessed his signature: the lawyer who prepared it is the only person aware of its contents. By a singular stipulation, the seals are not to be broken till your death!"

"And this will, for such, I doubt not it is?"

"Is in my possession!" replied the clergyman. "Why he should have selected me as the depositary of such a trust I cannot conceive, unless from my near relationship to George Maitland. Foster and Harrington are both joined with me in the trust, so far as the money is concerned; but the will, deed, or settlement—whatever it may be—*was confided to me alone!*"

This was not exactly true, but it answered the speaker's purpose: as our readers doubtless begin to suspect, he had not traveled from a distant part of England merely for the pleasure of informing Sir Richard Trevanian of the existence of such a document.

For some minutes the baronet and his visitor sat silently regarding each other like two gladiators about to commence the combat, each measuring the other's strength. Twice the former essayed to speak, but the words seemed arrested by some secret motive or feeling—shame, perhaps—upon his tongue. The parson saw his embarrassment, and encouraged him to proceed by a bland smile.

"I should very much like to know the contents of that paper!" said Sir Richard, who was the first to break the silence.

"I feel rather curious myself!" was the reply.

"Not to be opened till after my death!" repeated the father of Edward, musingly.

"There is the singular part of the affair!" observed the Reverend Onias Amberwell, by way of commentary; "the desire is a very natural one—pity the conditions prevent its ever being gratified—for it must leave you in a state of dreadful uncertainty respecting the position of your successor and his sister.

"Wretched!" muttered Sir Richard; "wretched!"

He took several turns up and down the apartment, paused once or twice opposite his visitor, and again resumed his walk.

"May I ask," he inquired, "if you are rich?"

"A poor college living," replied the clergyman, "of three hundred a year. The fact is I married young, and was disappointed in the fortune of my wife!"

"Three hundred a year!" repeated the tempter—for he had already conceived a plan by which he hoped to induce the speaker to betray his trust. "Ridiculous! Beneath the acceptance of a man of your talents!"

The parson crossed his hands and smiled meekly.

"Why, Farnsfield, which at this very time is vacant, exceeds a thousand a year.

"*Without the great tithes?*"

"Certainly!" said the baronet; "the great tithes have invariably been held by the lord of the manor."

"A sinful custom!" observed the Reverend Onias; "one I have both written and preached against—'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's!' I cannot understand how any man who has a proper sense of his sacred calling could accept the living, tempting as it is, under such an arrangement! Poor as I am, no persuasions would induce me to accept it *without the great tithes!*"

"Why, they amount to another thousand," exclaimed Sir Richard, angrily, "at the very least!"

"Were they only as many farthings," said his visitor, "they would not alter my opinion! It is a question of principle. We must never tamper with principles," he added, firmly, "or sin against our convictions!"

Again the two gentlemen regarded each other. The patron of Farnsfield knew at last the man and his price: imminent as was the danger, he could not make up his mind at an instant's notice to part with so large a portion of his income. The presentation alone he valued at five or six thousand pounds; the great tithes more than doubled its value. He required time for reflection, and invited the gentleman to remain to dinner.

"I really feel a great desire," he whispered, as they left the library, "that you should be the new rector; but this crotchet about the tithes is most unreasonable. However, we will talk it over in the evening; meanwhile, allow me to present to you Lady Trevanian, and my family!"

The Reverend Onias Amberwell bowed meekly, and followed him to the drawing-room.

He slept that same night and passed a portion of the followiug day at the hall. A week afterwards his name appeared in the *Gazette* as Rector of Farnsfield: none but the baronet and himself knew the price at which he had obtained it. Perhaps the lawyer, Mr. Foster, suspected it; but as he had no means of proving it, he held his tongue.

As for the third witness of the will—Captain Harrington—shortly after the death of Edward Trevanian, he had received orders to join his regiment in India.

Great was the astonishment of Mike Tippin, the old sexton, when he recognized in the new incumbent one of the three mysterious persons who had stopped to inquire their way to the Trevanian Arms, on the night of the young squire's death. It was still futher increased when he heard that he was to hold the great as well as the small tithes of the parish; the old man could not comprehend it, and resolved to consult his usual confidant, Dr. Bennet, upon the subject.

The physician heard the account he gave with surprise.

"Are you quite certain it is the same person?" he said.

"Certain!" repeated Mike. "Doctor, you know that I never mistake either the living or the dead! Don't I even recognize the skulls, as I turn them up in the churchyard? How, then, could I mistake one that had living eyes in its sockets, and a tongue to wag between its jaws? Besides, he gave me a crown! I said he wor a parson! It's my belief," he added, "that I shall see them all three again—soldier, parson, and lawyer!"

"Did you ever make any inquiries of Bet Guyton as to her visitors?" demanded Dr. Bennet.

"I did!" replied the sexton, "but it wor all of no use—she only called me a fool for my pains; denied that she had seen them, and swore I was drunk! But she didn't deceive me!" added the old man; "I could see she wor a lying all the time! Perhaps if your honor wor to try, you might get the truth out of her—she has a great respect for you!"

"I! Oh dear, no! Why should I take so much trouble about a matter which, after all, does not concern me!" exclaimed the phyiscian.

His visitor looked terribly annoyed; it was the second occasion on which he had been disappointed in eliciting the real opinion of the speaker when he consulted him.

Mike shook his head, and muttered something about want of confidence and closeness.

"Really," said the gentleman, "I have no confidence to give! The affair is certainly strange—so are the hieroglyphics: but it does not follow that I can read them! My advice you are perfectly welcome to! it is, to keep a still tongue upon the subject, Think of it as much as you please; but be careful how you speak of it; should it reach the ears of the new rector, he might remove you from your office!"

"He can't!" replied the sexton, triumphantly; "I was elected by the parishioners!"

"At least," observed Dr. Bennet, "he could annoy you—interfere with your fees and privileges! It would be a sad thing," he added with a smile, "to see two such important personages at variance!"

The last were cogent reasons, and the old man promised faithfully to be guided by the advice of the speaker; but at the same time he mentally avowed that he would keep an eye upon the proceedings of the Reverend Onias Amberwell.

This important point being settled, he took his leave, and that same day, the physician having a leisure hour upon his hands—rather an unusual circumstance with him—walked as far as the Trevanian Arms; he had attended the husband of Bet Guyton in his last illness, and he flattered himself that if any one could obtain her confidence he could.

Bet, however, proved closer than he imagined.

He found the old woman in a state of great excitement. The steward of Sir Richard had just called to serve her with notice to quit the cottage—no reason was assigned. The probability was that she guessed it.

"I won't go!" she kept repeating to herself; "and let them turn me out, if they dare! Service is no inheritance, it appears! I have lived here twenty years! My late lady promised me the place for life—so did her husband—and I'll not budge, come what will!"

"Have you anything to show for it?" inquired her visitor.

The hostess muttered something about her word being better than some people's oaths.

"Let them seize my things!" she added; "I'll shame him before the whole parish! A villain—a mean spirited wretch! baronet though he calls himself!"

"Hush, Bet—hush! Such words are punishable!"

"Not when you can prove them!" replied the old woman, tartly; "as he shall find, if he drives me beyond my patience! Would you believe it, doctor, that——"

She paused and reflected for an instant, then closed her lips, and began rocking herself to and fro in her chair.

"Believe what, Bet?" demanded the gentleman.

"Nothing—nothing! No—the time has not come yet! When it does, I'll speak out plainly enough! I am glad you are come!" she continued; "for you were always kind to the poor, and stand up for them when the rich try to ride over them rough-shod! Well, sir, old, poor and helpless as I appear, I tell you that Sir Richard Trevanian would as soon thrust his hand in the fire as threaten to turn me out of my house, if he only knew what I could tell him!"

"Something connected with his late son, perhaps?" observed her visitor.

"*No, sir!*" *answered the* woman, drily.

"If it is," resumed her adviser, "I fear it would have but little weight with him! Whatever the mystery connected with his visit to your cottage on the night of his death, I am well assured that the baronet knows all!"

Bet smiled incredulously.

"I can convince you!" continued the speaker. "The Reverend Onias Amberwell, one of the three gentlemen who met Edward Trevanian here, is the new rector of Farnsfield!"

"I know that, too—and can guess the means which made him so! A mercenary, mean-spirited hound! I'd rather join the Methodists, or even the Papists," added the hostess, "than sit under him! He is not a fit person to preach the Word of God who has broken his own!"

"Very true!"

The aged female fixed her eyes earnestly upon Dr. Bennet for several instants, and at last asked him if he would do her a service; he promised her readily.

"It must be," she observed, "without asking more than I choose to tell—for I must keep my word, though he has forgotten his!"

The gentleman pledged himself to rest satisfied with such confidence as she thought necessary for her purpose to give.

"And you will see Sir Richard?"

"Yes!"

Bet Guyton rose from her seat, and entered the little room at the back of the bar, carefully closing the door after her. Dr. Bennet, whose curiosity was aroused, heard the rattling of keys and the opening and shutting of drawers. When the mistress of the Trevanian Arms re-appeared, she held a sapphire ring of singular beauty in her hand. The stone was in the shape of a heart, and surmounted by a coronet in very small brilliants. He had frequently noticed the same gem, as he imagined, upon the finger of the baronet, who had told him on one occasion that it was the most ancient heir-loom of his family.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed; "has Sir Richard lost his ring!"

"No!"

"Where did you get it, then?"

The woman raised her finger to her lips, to remind him of his promise.

"He never saw it!" she said, sinking her voice; "for more than thirty years no human eye has rested on it except mine! Hold out your hand!"

The gentleman did as she directed him.

"And now promise me that no persuasion shall induce you to remove it from your finger till you return it to me! See Sir Richard—remind him of my dear lady's promise and his own! Tell him that I dare him—

mark the word—*dare him*—to turn me from my home! And take care, as you do so, that he notices the ring!"

"What more?"

"Nothing!" replied Bet; "I leave the rest to his own conscience—if he has such a thing!"

"Should it be silent?" observed the physician.

"*To his fears, then!*" added the woman, lowering her voice; "they will speak loud enough!"

Never had the curiosity of her visitor been so aroused, but his promise held him tongue-tied. He rapidly revolved in his mind every circumstance he had ever heard connected with the Trevanian family. He remembered the baronet from his boyhood—had attended his first wife in her dying illness; but could not give the remotest guess to the meaning of the clue so singularly intrusted to him.

"Confess, doctor," said the hostess, with a knowing smile, "that for once, with all your learning, you are at fault!"

The gentleman meekly owned it.

"It is a strange errand for you to undertake," she continued; "and not a very pleasant one; but there is no one else whom I can intrust with it—and you will perform it," she added—"perform it faithfully—although your word has been given to a poor, ignorant creature like myself!"

Her visitor renewed his promise.

"I would go myself," said Bet, passionately, "but I dare not trust my temper or my tongue! He would swear I stole the ring!—anything to get it in his possession; but he will not dare to attempt such a trick upon a gentleman like you!"

"It would indeed be useless!" observed Dr. Bennet; "that is, provided you have spoken the truth concerning it—for Sir Richard told me himself, when I admired a similar gem upon his finger, that it was unique!"

"It was what?" demanded Bet Guyton, not comprehending the word.

"That there was not another like it in the world!"

"I know—I know!" muttered the aged woman; "he thought so when he said it—and not without reason! Notice," she added, clutching her messenger by the arm and sinking her voice to a tone of deep earnestness, "if he has his upon his finger, before he sees the one on yours: it will leave him without even the excuse of a lie!"

As the physician walked slowly up the avenue, in his way to the hall, he pondered deeply on the singular mission he was charged with. Bet Guyton, he knew, had lived *in the family of the Trevanians* from her *childhood—so, in fact, had* her parents before her; she might be said to have been born in their service. She had known Sir Richard's father, and the ring was evidently the clue to some secret which affected the honor of the late or present possessor of the title—he was at a loss to guess which.

Before sending in his card to the baronet, he drew his glove carefully over his hand on which he wore the gem—for he remembered Bet's caution, and determined to adhere to her instructions to the very letter.

Sir Richard received him rather coolly. His lady had given him not a very truthful account of the interview which had taken place between herself and his visitor, when she sent for him to question him respecting the parentage of poor Fanny's child.

Although he had no reason to doubt the word of the mistress of the Trevanian Arms, he almost started when he recognized the highly prized heir-loom upon the finger of Sir Richard, and involuntarily felt to assure himself that the one intrusted to him was secure.

"There are two!" he mentally said; "the old woman spoke the truth!"

This conviction gave him confidence to proceed in the task he had undertaken.

"I called," said he, "to solicit a favor—or rather to enable you, Sir Richard, to correct what I conceive must be an error on the part of your steward."

"Bartram does not often make mistakes!" observed the baronet.

"I trust that he has in the present instance!" replied the doctor; "for the party that I came to interceede for has been a faithful servant of your family, and states that the first Lady Trevanian made her a promise—which you confirmed—that she should hold the cottage for life!"

"She lies, then!" exclaimed Sir Richard, impatiently; "she is a busy, meddling, ungrateful woman, and encouraged my son, who was half a madman, in I know not what strange vagaries! She shall not remain an hour longer than the law allows her upon my estate!"

"She is very old!" observed the kind-hearted messenger.

"It was her place to think of that!"

"And cannot have many years to live!"

"She has lived too long already!" angrily replied the baronet; "plotting against the family who were kind to her, and her parents before her! It is not so much the mischief she has done," he added, "as the ingratitude which annoys me!"

"Have you really made up your mind, Sir Richard?" inquired Dr. Bennet. "I am aware that personally I have little influence—and regret, for the poor old woman's sake, it is not more; but if——"

"My decision," interrupted the former

master of Bet Guyton, "is irrevocable! After that word," he added, haughtily, "I presume that no one who knows me, or values even in the slightest degree my good opinion, will attempt to shake it!"

"I, for one, certainly shall not make the trial!" quietly observed his visitor: "my appeal to your humanity having failed, I have only to fulfil my promise, and deliver my message!"

"Promise! Message!" repeated the baronet, disdainfully; "it is not very usual, I believe, Dr. Bennet, for one gentleman unnecessarily to interfere in the private affairs of another!"

"I do so most reluctantly!" replied the messenger of Bet Guyton; "but really I was placed in such a singular position—as you yourself will confess, when you hear all—that I could scarcely avoid it!"

Sir Richard Trevanian shrugged his shoulders impatiently, observed that his time was very much occupied, and requested him to proceed.

"In the first place, she refuses to quit the cottage!"

"Indeed!"

"In the next, she dares you to put your threat into execution, and remove her!"

"Insolent!" exclaimed the baronet, rising from his seat; "this exceeds the limits of my patience, and your meddling, troublesome impertinence! Am I Sir Richard Trevanian—who has twice had the honor to represent his sovereign! Am I the owner of this estate? Or have I been dreaming all these years that I was such a person?"

"Undoubtedly," replied his visitor, unmoved by the burst of passion and the not very courteous terms by which his conduct had been designated, "you are Sir Richard Trevanian."

"Then, as surely as I am, will I keep my word!" said the angry man; "and you must permit me to add, that, unless professionally, I shall cease to feel a pleasure in your visits to the hall!"

Dr. Bennet felt that the moment had arrived to put the truth of Bet Guyton's boast to the proof. He quietly withdrew the glove.

"Believe me," he said, "that I shall regret it deeply, if I have offended you! We have known each other long, and on more than one occasion you have expressed yourself grateful for my services! Come, Sir Richard," he added, extending his hand, "I am an old man, and have presumed, perhaps, somewhat too much upon my years! I knew you when a boy—was the friend of your late father—let us not part in anger! Give me your hand!"

With all his defects, the baronet, in manners, at least, was a gentleman. Besides, the speaker was a person whom it was not politic to offend—for few men were better known or respected in the county. Added to which, the *amende honorable* was complete.

With a condescending smile, he grasped the hand extended to him, and caught sight of the two rings—which, like the eyes of a basilisk, appeared to fascinate him. Never was metamorphose more complete—the self-possession which he had guarded throughout the interview completely deserted him. He staggered back into his seat, pale and gasping for breath.

"Are you ill?" demanded the physician, without withdrawing his hand, which Sir Richard still held in his.

"No! Yes! By heavens it is!" muttered the astonished man; "the grave must have given it up!"

"What up?"

"That ring! How did you obtain it? Let me look at it nearer! There can be no deception—the very flaw in the gem is there!"

Dr. Bennet remembered his promise, and declined to remove it from his finger.

"Gaze on it—examine it," he said, "as closely as you please—but it does not quit my hand!"

"Still you have not answered my first question! Where did you obtain it?"

"From Bet Guyton—the woman whose cause I came to plead!" replied her messenger. "As a man of honor, I feel compelled to add, that I have not the remotest idea of the nature of the mystery connected with it!"

The baronet eyed the speaker for some moments. At last he said, in a tone which betrayed considerable relief:

"I believe you!"

He then paced the room several times in silence. His visitor began to feel that his patience was exhausted, and once more would have taken his departure.

"Stay, sir!" said Sir Richard, mastering his emotion; "were I to attend only to the dictates of my anger, I should persist in my resolution of removing Bet Guyton from her cottage; but she is an old servant of my family—the late Lady Trevanian was much attached to her—and——in short, I have re-considered the affair, and permit her to remain!"

The doctor smiled: he guessed how little the considerations alleged had influenced the sudden change in the mind of the speaker. Besides, he had seen sufficient of the world to know that in nine cases out of ten it is the pretext, and not the motive, which is paraded to the world.

We need not say that it was so in the present instance.

The physician took his leave, but not before the baronet had made a second attempt—equally fruitless as the first—to induce the doctor to intrust him for an instant with the ring. But the messenger of the hostess of the Trevanian Arms was inflexible: he had given his word—and it was a bond to him.

When Bet heard the result of his visit she merely smiled, and received back the pledge she had intrusted to him. The gentleman longed very much to question her—never had his curiosity been so roused.

"Did he try to obtain it from you?" demanded the woman.

"Twice!" was the reply.

"I knew he would!" said Bet; "but I knew the man I placed my faith in! I dare not keep it by me—Sir Richard will move heaven and earth to obtain it!"

"Is it so important, then?" asked the gentleman, trying to appear as little interested as possible.

"He would give the best farm on his estate to hold it for an instant in his hand! Perhaps, sir, you —— but no—it is too much for a poor friendless creature like myself to ask at your hands!"

Her messenger assured her that he would most willingly undertake anything to serve her—but at the same time carefully avoided pressing his services, for—like most aged persons, she was exceedingly suspicious.

"Come to me," she said, "to-night: I will take care to have the house clear by ten o'clock! I can confide in you—yes! yes!" she muttered, "I can confide in you!"

He kept his word. The result of his visit, however, must be related at a future time and place.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, married love! each heart shall own,
Where two congenial souls unite;
Thy golden chains inlaid with down,
Thy lamp with heaven's own splendor bright.
LANGHORNE.

In one of the numerous narrow streets running in a line with the Almonry, Westminster—the rendezvous of the most depraved and dangerous characters—stood a small, old fashioned house, with an iron railing in front, of rather more respectable appearance than the rest of the locality. Years had elapsed since the brush of the painter had revived the faded green upon the doors and shutters, which were plated with iron—although there was little in the look of the place to induce the belief that it *contained anything worthy* the attention of the robber. The blinds in the narrow windows were dusty with age, and had any curious eye peered through the dim panes, it would have discovered nothing but a table, two or three ricketty chairs, and an almanac pasted against the white-washed wall. Upon the door was a small brass plate, on which, half obscured by dirt and verdigris, was the name of Peter Quin, general and commission agent, its occupant and owner. Peter was reputed rich—but, although a very aged man he kept no servant: his grand-daughter, Martha, attended to the household duties—which were not very onerous, especially in the kitchen department.

The neighbors held the old man in mingled respect and aversion. Respect from his reputed wealth—though how he had obtained it none could divine. It was evident that he had not many clients, since few persons were ever seen to visit him—and even those few appeared of the poorer class.

The cause of their aversion arose from the grasping, avaricious character of the man, and the mystery which surrounded him. He was a tall, gaunt figure, lean as Poverty, with a sharp, grey eye, which, when excited, was bright as an angry vulture's—in repose like a sleeping snake's.

One source of his income arose from the adjoining house, which was also his property. It was let out in lodgings: not to the poor—for those who frequented it paid well for the accommodation; but to such reckless, desperate characters as feared to meet the eye and hand of justice—men who were at war with their fellow-men, and had need of temporary concealment.

The building was reported to be well suited to the purpose for which it was employed. It had as many exits as windows: one into the Almonry, which lay at the back—another to Tothill Street—a third over the roof, to which a cord was secured, ready to be dropped at a moment's notice, into a dark, narrow alley. Down this cord an active man could easily descend, if closely pursued.

Never were any two human beings more unlike than Martha Quin and her grandfather: the latter we have described. The former still retained traces of great beauty, although the early bloom of youth had long since faded. Her hair and eyes were dark; her figure well-formed and graceful. There was a report that her mother had been of the gipsy race—perhaps it was merely the gossip of the neighbors.

Martha was as much beloved and pitied as her grandfather was hated and feared. Her appearance conveyed the impression of a person prematurely old, who had never known a childhood. Those who had known

her longest had never seen her dressed in anything but a coarse stuff gown, of a sombre hue, something between the color of a rusty pall and a very dark brown.

It was little that the meek, quiet-looking creature could give to the poor around her—but that little she gave freely, and the gift was invariably accompanied by kind words, which enhanced its value. She seldom left the house, unless in the absence of the old man, to see some neighbor who was ill; and even then her visits were made in fear and trembling, lest he should return before she got back again. Pleasure was a word of which she scarcely knew the meaning—she had never had a day's pleasure in her life.

Although so submissive in her appearance that the expression amounted almost to apathy, a physiognomist might have discovered a latent energy in the occasional flashes of her dark eye—a passion which, like the volcano, slept, but was not extinct. Many persons wondered why Peter Quin—who certainly appeared fond of his granddaughter—did not employ a servant, and permit her to dress and visit like other people. The cause was plain enough to those who knew him intimately. He never parted with a shilling, even for the necessaries of life, but it was like a drop of blood wrung from his heart; and, for many reasons, it would not have suited the old man to have had the eyes of a stranger to spy on his proceedings.

It was about eight in the evening, on the first of September—exactly a year after the death of Edward Trevanian. The shutters of the little parlor and office—for it served the purpose of both—were closed, and the old man was seated at his desk, busily occupied, by the light of a single candle, in examining the pages of a huge ledger lying open before him. The writing was a singular mixture of hieroglyphics and what the French call *argal*—a language peculiar to knights of the road, burglars, and other desperate characters.

His attention was roused by a single knock at the street door. He raised his head and listened; then drew from his fob an old-fashioned gold repeater, and regarded the hour.

"A quarter past eight!" he muttered, "it can't be the man I expect!"

The knock was repeated with considerable vigor—the visitor evidently began to feel impatient—and the light step of his grand-daughter was heard in the passage.

"Do not undo the chain, Martha!" exclaimed Peter, in a loud tone; let me know who it is first!"

In a few minutes she entered the room, and informed him that a stranger wished to see him.

"Did he give his name?" demanded her grandfather.

She silently placed a piece of paper upon the table before him. On it was written, in a disguised hand, the words: "Southwell, 1793—five hundred pounds."

The agent reflected for a few minutes, then tapped his wringled forehead, as if he had suddenly recollected the circumstance to which the date and money referred, and told his grand-daughter that he would see the gentleman.

"Gentleman!" repeated Martha in a tone of surprise. "He has not much the appearance of one, although his language denoted a person of superior education. He addressed me as if I had been a servant: not that I wonder at that!" she added, with a sigh, at the same time glancing at her faded dress.

The old man only smiled.

"In this world," he said, "we must not judge by appearances. Admit him! Yet, stay—I will go myself to prevent mistakes!"

He took the solitary candle from the table and shuffled from the room, followed by the woman, who was too much accustomed to the singular character of his visitors to express much surprise. Still, somehow or other, she did feel an unusual curiosity respecting the business which brought the stranger to the house.

On reaching the door, Peter Quin saw a tall man wrapped in an old camlet cloak, his hat drawn closely over his brow, standing as near to the half-opened entrance as possible, evidently with the wish to avoid observation.

"You desired to speak with me?" said the old man.

"Yes—that is if you are the same Peter Quin who at the date referred to in my paper served me in a certain affair."

"I am that same Peter Quin!" replied the agent, dropping the chain to admit his visitor, whom he conducted into the little parlor as soon as he had again secured the door.

"You may leave us, Martha," he observed; "I will let the gentleman out myself."

"Should he whom you expect arrive, what am I to say?"

"He will not be here this hour!" exclaimed the old man, looking at his watch; "and by that time we shall doubtless have finished our conversation. Should it prove otherwise, tell him I will see him in the morning."

"The stranger must be a client of importance!" mentally observed the woman,

as she withdrew; "it is not often that he breaks an appointment with the captain!"

"You recollect me?" said the stranger, as soon as he and the agent were by themselves.

"Perfectly!" answered the old villain; "and the business you employed me upon! It was a bad affair, although you paid me liberally! The man I employed, not content with obtaining the leaf from the register, took the communion plate from the church. So large a reward was offered, that I was compelled to supply him with the means of quitting the country. It ought to have been more!" he added, fretfully; double the sum, at least!"

"Should you prove willing to assist me now," observed his mysterious visitor, "the sum I am willing to pay may make up for your loss! I am ready to come down liberally!"

The eyes of the agent sparkled. Gold was his god, and he was at all times ready to worship those who were able to minister to his avarice. Yet, with his usual cunning, he affected to appear indifferent and muttered something about his having withdrawn from business—of course merely with the intention of enhancing the value of his services.

"In that case," said the gentleman, rising, "I must seek some other agent!"

"No—no!" exclaimed Peter, hastily. "I will do anything rather than disoblige an old client! Besides you know that you can trust me! This old head of mine," he added, touching his wrinkled brow, "is the depositary of strange and curious secrets! I could set half London by the ears—but I am close—close! What is it you require?"

"The abduction of an infant!" replied his visitor, lowering his tone. "It will prove no very difficult affair, since it belongs to exceedingly poor people, who reside in a lone cottage in a distant part of the country."

"The abduction only?" demanded Peter, with a furitive glance at his visitor. "Nothing more!"

"Nothing—except that you find some person who for a certain sum will take charge of the child, bring it up as their own, and ask no questions."

"And where is this infant?"

"That you shall know," answered the stranger, "when we have arranged the conditions and the sum. Are you willing to undertake what I require?"

"I am!" replied the agent. "Had you required more than the abduction of the infant, I would have had nothing to do with it: the eyes of justice are sharper than *they were, and I am getting* old—very old *—and must begin to think of* settling my affairs with heaven! It is very merciful," he added, in an anxious tone; "and I have not been more wicked than the rest of the world! We must all live!"

A haughty smile flitted over the lips of the stranger, as he heard the old rascal attempt palliating to his conscience the career of crime and villany he had ran.

"Your price, man?" he muttered, impatiently; "your price?"

If Peter Quin was a slow hand at striking a bargain, he was a very sure one. It was not his usual practice to name at once the precise sum for which he would undertake the lawless deeds so frequently required of him: he liked to dwell upon the difficulties, the chances, the risks—and so gradually prepare those who employed him for his exorbitant demand before he made it; but, having once made, it was a principle with him never to swerve from it.

"It is a difficult thing to find agents now," he begun, "whom you can trust, and I am too old to go myself! Is there likely to be any great stir made in the matter?"

"No—the parents are poor."

"Then something will depend upon the distance and the time—you have no idea, sir, how unreasonable men have grown: in my young days, they thought less of risking their necks than they do now of simple transportation—and yet I am told it is a very healthy country they send them to!"

"I have no time to waste in such discussions!" observed his visitor angrily, at the same time rising from his chair; "these are matters for *your* consideration—not *mine!* I did not come to huxter with you! For the last time, your price?"

"One thousand pounds!" slowly pronounced the agent; "the sum is a large one, but you can afford to pay it!"

"How do you know!" demanded the gentleman, in a tone of alarm.

The old man smiled, but remained silent. There were few who employed him to whose name and station he did not contrive to obtain some clue.

"It matters but little whether I can afford it or not," continued the speaker, convinced by a moment's reflection that the means he had taken to prevent the discovery of his position in life had been impenetrable: "since I must pay it!"

Peter breathed a sigh of satisfaction—for he began to fear that he had overshot his mark by the exorbitancy of his demand.

"The sum you name must include everything!" observed the stranger.

"Everything!"

"And you engage to provide—respectably, of course—for the child?"

"Yes."

"How is it to be paid?"

"Five hundred down, and five hundred a week after the abduction," answered the agent, after a pause. "I say a week, because it may not be quite convenient for you to visit me sooner; but it must not exceed that term!"

"What if it should?"

"The child would be restored to his friends, and the first five hundred, consequently, might as well have been thrown into the Thames!"

The bargain of infamy and crime was struck. Before leaving the house, the man whose manners and language ill accorded with his appearance, threw down upon the desk of Peter Quin five hundred pounds, in small notes and gold.

The agent secretly smiled at the precaution. Had he written him a cheque for the amount upon his banker, it would not have made him better acquainted with his name than he was already.

"And now," he said, after counting the money and securing it in his desk, "the name of the place?"

The stranger whispered it in his ear.

"Good!" said Peter, writing it down; "and the child's?"

It was imparted in the same cautious manner.

The wrinkles on the brow of the man of many secrets became suddenly deeper when he heard it, and he looked at his visitor reproachfully, as if he had overreached him in the bargain he had made.

"He thinks he has deceived me!" he muttered, as he carefully fastened the street door, after the departure of the stranger; "so rich, and yet so mean! But there is no honesty left in the world!"

On returning to the parlor, he carefully drew the bolts; then, stooping under the table, with some difficulty raised one of the boards of the floor, and drew from a recess beneath, a heavy iron casket, which he opened with a key suspended by a ribbon attached to his watch chain.

"It is the same name!" he exclaimed; "my recollection did not deceive me! Peter Quin has a head as long as his own! They must play well who shuffle the cards with me! A good day's work!" he added, with a chuckle; "an excellent day's work! A thousand down, and the infant in my hands!"

A knock was again heard at the street door. The casket was quickly replaced, and the old man prepared to receive his new visitor, whom Martha had spoken of as the captain. He was a handsome, reckless-looking man, apparently about thirty years of age. As he swaggered into the room, he attempted to chuck the agent's granddaughter under the chin. The woman drew back with unmistakeable signs of aversion.

"Go to your room, Martha!" exclaimed the old man, angrily; "I will let the captain out myself!"

She instantly disappeared, as if happy at the release.

"Peter, my old friend," exclaimed the ruffian, in a swaggering tone, "you are too sharp with that poor girl! It is time you thought of procuring her a husband!"

"Yourself, captain!" replied the agent sarcastically.

"And why not? My family——"

"Pah!" interrupted Peter; "what do I care for family! The worst men I have ever known have boasted of the best blood in England in their veins! Martha must never marry whilst I live!" he added: "I'll have no son-in-law to pry into my affairs, worm out my secrets, and——"

"Hang his father-in-law!" exclaimed the ruffian, with a laugh; "in order to get his wife's fortune! You are right, old Plutus—quite right!"

The grandfather of Martha bit his lips and scowled fearfully.

"*I should be beforehand with him!*" he said deliberately; "for there are few men who visit here whom I could not consign to the gallows! If my limbs are feeble, my head is not! My brain is as active as ever! I should like to see the man," he added, with a peculiar expression, "who would attempt it!"

Perhaps the captain thought that the threat was levelled at himself—for he instantly changed the subject, and they at once proceeded to the business which had brought them together.

As it merely concerned the disposal of some plate and jewels, which the visitor of Peter Quin said he had unexpectedly inherited, we shall not trouble our readers with the details of their interview. The old man had them at his own price. It was astonishing the vast amount of property he had purchased of the same party on the same terms. But then, as the gentleman stated, he was a man of excellent and extensive family connections. One relative or another was always dying, leaving him similar legacies.

This last transaction closed Peter Quin's accounts for the night. After carefully making his rounds, to assure himself that every window and door was secure, he read a chapter in the Bible, and retired to rest; for, as he observed to the stranger, he was getting an old man, and it was time he began to think of making up his accounts with heaven. Somehow or another, he never contrived to balance them; the summing up was fearfully against him.

Great was the astonishment in Farnsfield when it became generally known that Therese and Charles Graham were about to be united in marriage. Mrs. Franklin and the Misses Shark pronounced the young organist to be mad. The part Dr. Bennet took in the affair excited great animadversion—for he was not only to act as father of the bride, but the wedding breakfast was to be prepared at his house.

The kind-hearted man openly declared that his only regret was, he had not a daughter to officiate as bride's-maid on the occasion, and thereby give a yet more convincing proof of the esteem in which he held the long-slandered, patiently-enduring girl, whose character he so zealously vindicated, that many persons began to ask themselves if they had not been misled by appearances, and judged her too harshly.

Bitter were the regrets and self-reproaches of Stephen Franklin at having listened to the evil counsels of his mother—who, as a matter of course, refused to be convinced. Dr. Bennet, she declared, ought to be ashamed of himself for standing up as he did for the reputation of such a worthless hussy, who had disgraced not only herself but the whole parish.

On the morning appointed for the ceremony, the kind-hearted physician called at the cottage in his carriage, to convey Therese and Mary Page to the church: both were simply but handsomely dressed. The poor, sensitive girl would willingly have declined such a compliment—she knew the envious remarks it would excite; her faithful nurse, on the contrary, gloried in it, thinking it would give the lie to the evil reports against her dear young mistress.

"Courage, my own sweet Therese!" fondly whispered the young organist in her ear, as he left the cottage to walk to the church; "a few hours will see you in your own quiet home in Mansfield! Would it were a palace, for your sake!"

"I have one already!" observed the bride, blushing deeply; "your true heart, Charles! I once told you that it was gold—pure gold—and it has not deceived me!"

"Nor ever will!" exclaimed the physician; "but away with you, you happy rascal!" he added, with a good-humored smile. "I saw the rector last night, and he promised to be punctual! It is nearly the hour! You must make haste, or your bride will be at the church before you!"

Charles needed no second hint; but, snatching a kiss—which his future wife did not appear deeply offended at—hastened from the cottage, with a heart overflowing with happiness; for the dream of his boy-*hood, the hope of his manhood*, was all *but accomplished: a few minutes* would make him the husband of the woman he adored.

Everything was prepared for their departure: Mary Page had seen to that. Little Fanny was left in the charge of the landlady, during her temporary absence to officiate as bridesmaid to her young mistress.

The church was crowded by the female portion of the parishioners. Many a comment was made as Dr. Bennet led the trembling Therese from his carriage to the altar. Some blamed him; those who judged more charitably of his conduct, praised him.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, several of her former companions advanced to the railings of the altar, and congratulated her: the tardy reparation of their former coldness was received kindly, but sadly.

As Charles Graham led his wife triumphantly down the centre aisle of the church, they passed the pew in which Mrs. Franklin and the Misses Shark were sitting: the lawyer's daughters tossed their heads and tittered disdainfully—yet they had not been above pressing in with the rest, to witness the marriage; but curiosity got the better of their gentility.

The eyes of Dr. Bennet sparkled angrily as he noticed how deeply their insulting manner had pained the bride.

"She is a lucky girl, to have got a husband at last!" observed Mrs. Franklin, quite loud enough to be heard by those around her.

"Your son would have been only too glad to have had her!" retorted Mary Page; "but she refused him—knowing the life she would lead with such a mother-in-law!"

Poor Therese trembled violently. The physician advanced to her side, and took her by the hand.

"I am glad," he said, looking at the same time at Mrs. Franklin, "that this evil-minded, malicious woman has given me the occasion of stating publicly—what I have more than once declared in private—my knowledge of your innocence! I am an old man," he added; "known to you all—and here, in the temple of Him whose attribute is truth, I aver that the child whose parentage caused the unjust suspicions of her father, and has excited the scandal of the neighborhood, is not the child of Therese Moore, now the wife of Charles Graham! I attended its mother at its birth, was the first who heard its helpless cry, and am ready at any time to make oath of my assertion! Persevere, Therese," he added, "in the path of duty and virtue, as you have hitherto done; and if, after this solemn declaration, any are found still evil-

minded enough to slander you, console yourself with the conviction that they do so from malice and envy of everything which is pure and noble—that God in His own good time will confound their wickedness, and manifest your innocence triumphantly to the world!"

Poor Therese! she had only sufficient strength left to raise the hand of the noble champion of truth to her lips, when she fainted in the arms of her husband.

Mrs. Franklin and the Misses Shark left the church covered with confusion at being thus publicly reproved and pointed out. The lawyer afterwards threatened an action, but eventually thought better of it.

As they quitted the sacred edifice, several hisses accompanied their exit.

CHAPTER XII.

The old widow, at whose cottage Therese and her faithful servant, Mary Page, had taken up their temporary abode, could not resist the natural desire which she felt of being present at the marriage of her lodger. In fact, we might say both her lodgers, since Charles Graham, for many years previous to his removal from Farnsfield, had known no other home than the one her humble roof afforded.

At first she thought of taking little Fanny with her, but fearing lest its appearance might cause some unpleasant feeling to the bride and bridegroom, or give rise to additional scandal amongst the gossips of the village, she considerately abandoned that part of her design; and, calling in a neighbor's child—a girl about twelve years old, named Kate Barnes—she confided the infant to her care, with strict injunctions not to leave the house till her return.

Kate promised, and the dame started without the slightest anticipation of evil, to witness the ceremony at the church.

In something less than half an hour after her departure, a horseman rode up to the door of the cottage, dismounted, and, fastening his rein to the little rustic porch, strode into the kitchen, where Kate was sitting with her charge upon her knee.

Without knowing why, the child began to feel alarmed at the intrusion of the stranger, whom she afterwards described as a tall, dark man, dressed in a riding suit of grey cloth, with boots drawn over his knees, and armed with a heavy hunting whip.

"Is that the child of Therese Graham?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir!" *faltered the* youthful nurse.

Without a second word he snatched the infant from her arms, and began to envelope it in a large shawl, which he took from the cradle, keeping his eyes all the while fixed with a menacing expression upon Kate, who sat regarding him without daring to utter a word.

When the ruffian had thus far accomplished his design, he drew a pistol from his belt and deliberately leveled it at the head of the little nurse.

"If you quit your seat, or attempt to give an alarm," he exclaimed, with a fearful oath, "I will return and shoot you! Do you mark me?"

"Yes—yes, sir!" shrieked the terrified girl.

Still further to impress his threat upon the child, he seized her rudely by the arm, and was about to repeat his menace, when Kate closed her eyes, and fell senseless from her seat.

"All right!" he muttered, catching up the infant in his arms, and retreating to the door.

The next instant the clatter of his horse's hoofs was heard, as he galloped at a furious pace over the green and dashed up the road to Mansfield.

When the dame returned to the cottage after witnessing the marriage, she found Kate, who had recovered her senses, sobbing and crying piteously. It was some time before the astonished woman could draw from her an account of what had taken place; when she at last comprehended the loss of her charge, her consternation and grief, to say the least of it, equalled the poor girl's.

"What would Therese say? Such an outrage had never before been heard of in Farnsfield!"

With a heavy heart she directed her steps towards the house of Dr. Bennet, where, as we before stated, the wedding-breakfast was to be held. The worthy physician was a magistrate, and, like most of the inhabitants of Farnsfield, the good dame placed unbounded confidence in his sagacity and penetration. He would ferret the ruffian out, she felt assured, if any man could.

With prudent forethought she took the still trembling Kate with her—for, so strange was the story she had to tell, that without the presence of her witness she doubted whether it would be believed.

The bridal party had been some time seated at the table of the hospitable man, when his old housekeeper entered the room and informed him that his presence was required in the surgery. Her master saw from her manner that something serious had occurred, and, ever prompt at the call of humanity and suffering, rose to follow her.

"God bless him!" exclaimed Charles, as he left the room; "he is the poor man's friend! Dear Therese, how nobly he vindicated your conduct in the church! How his words must have confounded your enemies! They will never dare to breathe a word against the purity they have outraged again! It would be a blasphemy, alike against truth and heaven!"

His bride smiled faintly. She shared his gratitude to her defender, but not his confidence in the result. Bitter experience had taught her that slander, if it has not the heads of hydra, possesses at least as many tongues—for every one that was silenced, a dozen would wag against her. When Dr. Bennet returned, his countenance was exceedingly pale and agitated; he was laboring under some unusual excitement.

"My dear children," he said, taking a hand of each; "it is perhaps wisely ordained that happiness in this world never should be perfect! It would link our hearts too closely to earth for us to direct our thoughts to heaven! I have received intelligence which I fear will throw a damp upon your joy—intelligence which you must learn!"

Charles fixed his eyes anxiously upon the speaker, and involuntarily threw his arm around his bride, as if to shield her from some vague danger or approaching sorrow.

"My father!" faltered Therese; whose thoughts had reverted frequently during the day to her deceived and cruel parent.

"The news does not affect him!"

"Thank heaven," murmured the poor girl, "I can endure all else! You do not know," she added, with a melancholy smile, "how the heart becomes strengthened by being made familiar with sorrow!"

Her husband pressed her passionately to his breast, and mentally vowed that it should be the study of his life to guard her future days from its corroding cares.

In sunshine and in gloom the poor musician nobly kept his promise. The abduction of her niece was a cruel blow to Therese—it fell with twofold force arriving on her wedding-day. She knew not to whom to attribute an act for which she was at a loss to divine a motive. She loved the motherless infant as tenderly as if it had been her own. It was the image of her dead sister, and gave promise of inheriting her fatal beauty as well as her misfortunes!

It was in vain that Dr. Bennet used every exertion to discover the ruffian who carried off the child. The scheme had been too artfully planned and too skilfully executed. The fellow was traced as far as Nottingham, where he had hired the powerful roan horse on which he had travelled to Farnsfield. *There the clue* was broken; not *even the large reward of* a hundred pounds —which the physician benevolently offered —induced those who must have been in his confidence to betray the trust reposed in them.

Although neither Therese nor her husband entertained the least suspicion of the authors of the outrage, their constant friend was not without his ideas upon the subject, but he prudently kept them to himself. Without the slightest proof or probability to offer, he felt that it would have been folly on his part to have made them known.

"God will discover them," he said, as he handed the weeping Therese to the chaise which was to convey her to her future home at Mansfield, "in his own good time!"

"Could it have been my father?" exclaimed the disconsolate bride, struck by a sudden hope. "He loved the infant, and in his desolation might——"

The physician shook his head. Whoever the perpetrator of the act might ultimately prove to be, he felt assured that it was not the blind old adjutant. Had the angry soldier known that Fanny was the daughter of his favorite child, perhaps the convictions of the doctor might have been different.

"Poor girl!" he muttered, as the chaise drove off; "sorrow seems to have marked her for its own—seldom has a life so young and pure been clouded with such misfortunes. She has sacrificed her happiness nobly, and without a murmur—heaven will one day reward her!"

The words of the speaker proved prophetic; but years were destined to elapse before the sunshine he predicted dawned upon her declining years—but we must not anticipate.

CHAPTER XIII.

To do the office of a neighbor,
And be a gossip at his labor. BUTLER.

For many years Mike Tippin, the sexton and beadle of Farnsfield, had prided himself on being the chronicler of the few events of any note which occurred in the parish. In addition to his own personal observation and knowledge, he had inherited many traditions and facts from his father, who filled both offices before him. The scene which had taken place in the church, on the marriage of Therese had set him thinking, and, instead of adjourning—as was his usual custom—to the village ale-house, he amused himself by making a tour in the churchyard —a sure sign with those who knew him that he had either something upon his mind, or was occupied with some project. On

occasions the churchyard was his study, and the grave-stones the books which he consulted; after which observation we need scarcely add, that the range of his feelings and plans were strictly local—Mike knew nothing of the world beyond his parish.

The old man had taken several turns under the stately row of elms which bordered the pathway to the church, when his attention was attracted by the appearance of a stranger sitting on the steps of the Trevanian monument.

It was a man apparently much older than himself—for his head was bowed with age—and the thin locks of long hair which were visible from beneath his broad beaver, fell like a snow-wreath upon the collar of his black riding coat.

Notwithstanding his being most respectably dressed, the stranger produced anything but a favorable impression upon Mike, who—although he had never so much as heard of the name of Lavater, was a disciple of the great physiognomist in his own peculiar way—he did not either like his bushy, overhanging eyebrows, or the cold grey eyes which peered beneath. The wrinkles upon the forehead above were too close and interlaced—the sexton mentally compared them to a network whose meshes had been woven by the hand of sin; but it was the mouth which particularly displeased him—it expressed cunning, avarice, and cruelty. The first question the sexton asked himself was, Who can he be? The next, What can he want? for he felt convinced that it was not without a motive that the stranger had visited the churchyard, and sat peering at him from under his hat so earnestly.

Mike prided himself upon tact; he was too skilful to betray his game by showing his cards, or, in other words, to let the remarkable-looking personage know that he had excited his curiosity, by being the first to address him. He therefore continued his walk, stopping occasionally to replace the osier band which had escaped from some humble turf-bound grave.

The object of curiosity at last arose from his seat, and, leaning upon a very handsome gold-headed cane, advanced slowly towards him.

"I have him!" mentally ejaculated Mike.

"A fine old church!" observed the stranger.

"Very, sir!" replied the sexton, in a tone of affected indifference—as if he did not care to be interrupted in his meditations; "many persons come to Farnsfield to see it, but I have known it, man and boy, for more than sixty years."

"You are a native of this place, then?"

The old man explained to him the offices which he held *in the parish.*

"You can inform me," continued the querist, "whose monument it is that I have been examining?"

"Wants to know something about the Trevanians!" said Mike, mentally—at the same time resolving to be exceedingly cautious.

"Yes, sir!" he replied; "it belongs to one of our old families—indeed, I may say, the very oldest in the county; there is scarcely a nook in the church which has not some stone or tablet with the name of Trevanian!"

"Trevanian!" repeated the stranger; "I have heard of the family before. I remember, when a boy, to have heard of Sir John Trevanian—but he must have been dead many years since. Do you recollect him?"

"I ought!" exclaimed Mike; "I assisted to bury him. He was the father of the present baronet—a gay, reckless man, who kept open house; but he was not the worst of his name," he added; "he has been dead nearly forty years. They are a singular race, and seldom live to be very old!"

"The monument, I perceive, has been lately opened?"

"It was for the young squire, Master Edward," said the sexton; "poor young gentleman—every one loved him! He died on the very day he came of age. He was Sir Richard's eldest son by his first lady."

"The daughter of ——"

The stranger checked himself. He was on the eve of betraying too intimate a knowledge of the family whose history he was inquiring into.

"Some great London merchant," said Mike, finishing the sentence for him; "her fortune redeemed the family estate. Pity that her son did not live to inherit it."

"He died unmarried then?"

"Yes."

Although these questions were put in a tone of indifference, and were such as any traveller might have asked, Tippin felt convinced that his new acquaintance had some secret motive for them—but what that motive might be he was at a loss to divine. Several times during their walk—for they had insensibly strolled to a distant part of the churchyard—he had attempted to take a closer survey of his companion's features; but each time he attempted to do so he found his cold grey eyes fixed upon him with so sinister an expression, that he turned his own aside and abandoned his design. It was not often that the old sexton felt baffled, but this time he was completely so.

"I wish I could see him without his hat!" he mentally exclaimed: "I could read them then!"

"Perhaps, sir," he exclaimed, struck by

a sudden thought, "you would like to see the interior of the church—there are several remarkable monuments; and as you seem anxious in those matters, they may interest you?"

The offer was coolly declined.

By this time they had reached the ruin of an octagonal building known by the name of the bone-house, from the purpose to which it was applied. It had been the chapter room, and was once connected with the church, by a cloister, of which traces might have been seen where the ivy—which, like a thick mantle, enveloped the ruins—permitted the architecture to be seen, in the rich mullions, slender columns, and shields emblazoned with the arms of the former abbots—for the church had once been that of a mitred abbey which was suppressed at the Reformation.

Close to the wall, directly facing the south, was a solitary grave—no stone indicated the name, age, or rank of its occupant; a white rose-tree, which had grown to an extraordinary height—planted, doubtless, by the hand of affection—was its only monument. It was the month of September, and a fast-fading flower or two yet lingered on its stems. The stranger plucked one of these; in raising his arm to reach it, Mike obtained a better view of his features than he had yet been enabled to do, and the conviction instantly struck him that he had seen them before.

"Whose grave is this?" said his companion, as he placed the flower in the button-hole of his riding coat.

"Mary Beacham's!" answered the sexton.

"And who was Mary Beacham?"

"One of the prettiest girls in Farnsfield!" said Mike. "I remember her when I was a young man—the pride and the belle of the place! Poor thing! she died young, and, by her own request, was buried here! although as you perceive, it is the part of the churchyard the least tenanted!"

"It was a singular choice!"

"Those who die young," philosophically observed the village chronicler, "frequently take strange fancies. It was not here," he added, in a tone which betrayed that he was scarcely conscious of what he was uttering, "that she ought to have been buried!"

"Where, then?" demanded the stranger, fixing his eyes searchingly upon the sexton, who had, involuntarily, perhaps, turned his face towards the Trevanian monument.

Mike started and hesitated, then muttered something about its being much more natural, *that the dead* should be buried amongst *their own people; he felt* secretly annoyed at having been lead to speak upon the subject, after his resolution to be cautious, too. It was evident that, with all his cunning, he was no match to the man he had to deal with.

Whether his companion had any motive or not for the queries he had put, the old man had no opportunity for deciding—for he immediately changed the subject, by observing that Farnsfield appeared to be a very pleasant place; and added, that he had seen a cottage—describing the one lately inhabited by the adjutant, which he felt half inclined to take.

"You mean Mr. Graham's!" replied the sexton, not suspecting that the speaker had had any design in leading him to speak about the old soldier.

Mike explained to him that the father of Therese had merely been the tenant of the place, and, giving way to his natural love of gossip, proceeded to relate all that had lately occurred in the village—the death of one daughter—the evil reports which had blighted the character of the second—the fury of the blind old soldier, and his abrupt departure from Farnsfield.

If the gentleman had really had any object in the inquiries he had made, he had evidently obtained all that he wished to learn. Duly thanking his informant for the information respecting the cottage, and thanking him for the pleasant chat they had had together, he bade him "good morning," observing, as he drew a large, old-fashioned gold repeater from his pocket, that it was time for him to return to his inn.

At the sight of the watch, the uncertainty and doubts of Mike vanished in an instant. Placing his hand upon the stranger's arm, he exclaimed, with a triumphant chuckle:

"I thought I knew you from the very first!"

"Knew me!" said the man with the watch, with a sinister scowl.

"*I know you, Peter Quin,*" repeated the sexton, "as well as you know me! Time has wrinkled us both—but there's a face," he added, pointing to the dial of the repeater, which the stranger still held in his hand, "which it has not changed! You forget how often I have wound it up!"

The agent—for it was no other than the man of many affairs—hastily replaced the watch in his pocket, at the same time assuring the speaker, with much earnestness, that he was mistaken.

"Pooh—pooh!" exclaimed his quondam acquaintance; "it is very rarely that I am wrong in my conclusions! Why, now I look at you, I could swear to you amongst a thousand! There is the same cold, grey eye with which you used to watch Mary Beacham and Sir John Trevanian, when he

danced with her at the village feast! The idea of your asking me whose grave it was!" he added, with a laugh; "capital—as if you did not know it as well as I who dug it!"

The father of Peter had, many years before the commencement of our story, filled the office of parish clerk. He was a very old man, whilst Mike was yet in his prime: no wonder, then, that still he remembered the watch. He had often admired it when a boy—for Mr. Quin had, both from his office and reputed wealth, been a most important person in his estimation. His son, shortly after the death of the young woman alluded to, had quitted Farnsfield suddenly; and as his father never spoke of him, even to his most intimate friends, and, by his will, when he died, had left all his property to a nephew, every trace of Peter had been lost.

"Well," said the agent, unable any longer, after such convincing proofs, to deny his identity, "I am your old acquaintance, Peter Quin! Of course it was not my intention to deceive you!"

"Of course not!" drily observed the sexton.

"You only anticipated the discovery!" continued Peter; "though, to be candid with you, you are the only person in Farnsfield to whom I intended to make it—which you cannot wonder at, when you reflect on my father's unnatural will!"

"He cut you off with a shilling!"

"He did!" exclaimed the agent, with a fearful curse; "but his money never throve with him who inherited it!"

"True!" said Mike, with a shudder; "your cousin died poor!"

"And childless!"

"Oh dear, no!" replied the garrulous old gossip; "he left one son, who for many years was organist here; but has since got a better berth at Mansfield! It was his wedding," he added, "which you must have seen quitting the churchyard as you entered!"

He knew not why, but the words had no sooner escaped the speaker's lips, than he bitterly regretted them: perhaps the feeling was induced by the sinister smile which he detected on the lips of his hearer.

Before taking his leave, Peter Quin asked his old acquaintance several more questions: amongst others whether he had ever heard his father speak of him after his departure—and appeared considerably relieved when informed that the old clerk had never been known to mention his name to any one.

"We all thought it strange!" continued the sexton, "especially as you must have parted friends with him, else he would never have given you the watch he was so proud of! How can you account for his disinheriting you?"

He to whom the question was addressed muttered something about the affections of old men changing with absence; and added that his cousin had doubtless slandered him.

"You will find it difficult to make the people of Farnsfield believe that!" observed Mike; "old Graham was as upright a man as ever broke bread! Every one respected him, but ill-luck seemed to pursue him! His cattle died—some folks said that they were poisoned! One or two bills that he had taken for stock were never paid, and those into whose hands they had fallen completed his ruin by law expenses! Then his wife died broken-hearted they say; and, poor fellow, he soon followed her to the grave!"

During the narration of the misfortunes which had successively fallen upon the father of Charles Graham, Peter Quin evinced the utmost enjoyment. His eyes, usually so cold, sparkled with excitement; and a low, chuckling sound—something like the hissing of a serpent—issued from his thin lips.

"Fortune has been kinder to me!" he observed, "I have just returned from India, the land of promise, where everything I undertook turned at my touch to gold! I could buy half Farnsfield, if it were offered for sale to-morrow! I need not regret the miserable pittance my cousin robbed me of!"

We need not say that the account which the aged ruffian gave of his past career was a false one. But he had his own reasons for making the man who had recognised him believe that he had for many years been absent from England. Not that Mike did believe him.

"You must come and see me," he said, "at the Angel, at Mansfield! I am staying there for the present, and shall return directly!"

The sexton promised, and, shaking hands with the acquaintance of his early years—whom he had so singularly recognised—bade him adieu; adding, that he would walk over in the evening.

"Come early!" exclaimed the hypocrite, as he prepared to retrace his steps through the churchyard, "and ask for Mr. Quin."

The old man renewed his promise, and so they separated.

In less than an hour afterwards the agent was on his road to London. With his usual knowledge of the world, he had exacted no promise of secrecy from his former friend. He knew that garrulous, gossip-loving personage could not have kept it if he would—so innate was his desire of relating anything which approached the

marvellous. As he pursued his journey, he chuckled at the idea of the fruitless walk he had given him, and saw the poor, weary old man retracing his steps with a disappointed air to Farnsfield.

"I can't make it out!" said Mike, speaking half aloud, as soon as he was alone; "I should as soon have expected to see the dead quit their graves, as Peter Quin return!

"India!" he repeated, musingly; "I don't believe a word of it! Strange things are about to happen," he muttered, "strange things—let who will live to see the end of it!"

The first thing he heard on his return to the village was the abduction of the infant from the cottage of Therese. At first he felt inclined to attribute its disappearance to the visit of Peter Quin, but could not hit upon a motive either to interest or connect him with the crime, and so dismissed the subject from his mind. When he discovered the mysterious manner in which the agent had disappeared from the place, and the shabby trick he had played him, the old man's suspicions returned; but he was too much mortified at having been overreached and made a fool of, to breathe a hint upon the subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

Come, little infant, love me now,
With thine unsuspected years,
Clear the cares that dim my brow,
Disperse my sorrows and my fears.
Pretty, surely, 'twere to see,
By young Love old Time beguiled,
While our sportings are as free
As the nurses with the child. MARVEL.

BEFORE the agent quitted his home on his expedition to Farnsfield, he left strict directions with Martha how to conduct herself in his absence with his clients—as he termed those who employed him in their nefarious designs: she was to represent him as indisposed to some; to others she was merely to state that he was engaged.

With her usual meek submission, the poor creature promised to act as he desired; it was a relief to her to be left even for a few days alone. How sad must that heart be to which solitude is a pleasure; her mind, naturally pure and loving, revolted at the life of infamy her father led—for she was no stranger either to his pursuits or character.

With his usual cunning, Peter Quin did *not even give the agent whom he employed in the abduction of little* Fanny reason to suspect his intended absence from his home; although trusted by many in concerns which affected not only their honor but their lives, he himself trusted no one.

For the first time in her life, Martha ventured to make an excursion a few miles from London. How beautiful did the green lanes and fields appear to her. She was never tired of admiring the trees and flowers; everything she saw delighted her—for it possessed the charm of novelty.

The spot she had chosen for her walk was the fields near Hampstead; groups of happy children were sporting in every direction, for the day was a holiday, and the little urchins, attended by their nurses or parents, were enjoying themselves in the fresh air and genial sunshine.

Several times Martha paused to observe them; she compared their joyous childhood with the recollections of her own solitary infancy. She had never known a mother's tender care—a father's caress—both her parents died ere she could remember them.

Leaving the fields she found herself upon the heath, where the scene became even more animated; a party near her particularly attracted her attention. It consisted of an aged couple, their son and daughter-in-law, who were seated upon the grass enjoying a frugal repast, whilst the children of the latter pursued their sports and gambolled round them. One little sturdy fellow, about six years of age, had stolen his grandfather's stick, which he bestrode, and doubtless imagined himself exceedingly well mounted.

Two girls—delicate, fairy-looking creatures—appeared highly to enjoy a game of ball with an elder brother, who would toss the ball upon the clean white napkin spread upon the grass—a hint, perhaps, that he thought the time was come for himself and sisters to share in the distribution of the good things they had brought with them. Once or twice his father raised his finger reprovingly, but the old man, with a quiet smile, threw back the ball, and broke into a joyous laugh when he succeeded in hitting him.

Martha was so struck by this picture of domestic happiness that she seated herself upon the trunk of a tree which had fallen from age, and paused to contemplate it. It filled her heart with the most tender emotion, and tears, not of envy but sympathy, unconsciously trickled down her cheeks.

The ball once more alighted upon the cloth; the old man caught it up, and threw it over his head towards the spot where Martha was sitting. With a joyous laugh, the children commenced racing to see who should first obtain it. So eager were they,

that they did not notice a deep pool of stagnant water in their path. The little fellow who had been bestriding his grandfather's cane, tripped and fell in. There was a general cry of consternation.

Heeding only the impulse of her woman's nature, the solitary creature—who had been silently watching their proceedings—rushed to the bank, plunged in, and, seizing the child by his frock, succeeded in dragging him on the grass, just as the elder members of the family, alarmed by their shrieks, reached the spot.

"He is not hurt!" observed Martha, as she placed the child in its terrified mother's arms.

Never had the speaker felt so happy. She had been useful—her exertions had in all probability saved the life of a fellow-creature! How she had accomplished it was a mystery to herself—for the pond was not only deep, but the banks steep and difficult to ascend.

"Why, as I live," exclaimed the father of the boy, "it is Miss Quin!"

At the sound of her name the elder portion of the party drew back with an involuntary expression of dislike.

"They know me!" thought Martha, with a sigh; "I have inherited the brand of Cain from my wretched parent!"

The means by which she had been recognized occurred shortly afterwards to her recollection. The man was one of her grandfather's tenants, and consequently no stranger to the evil reputation which he bore in the neighborhood. The accident, which might have ended fatally, put a stop to the pleasures of the day. It was decided that they should at once return to London. The elder boy was dispatched for the horse and cart, which had been left at the public-house hard by. He speedily returned, and Peter Quin's daughter was invited to take a seat with them—they could scarcely offer less, after the service which she had rendered them. On reaching the house—which was in the adjoining street to the one inhabited by her father—Mrs. Gurton, the mother of the boy, requested her to remain and spend the day with them.

Martha glanced at her dress, which was still wet and stained with the slime and duckweed of the pond.

"Never mind that!" observed the grateful woman; "I can lend you a change of things—if you are not above wearing them!"

The poor girl smiled sorrowfully, as she contemplated her threadbare gown, at the idea of her being above wearing anything. It was the first time in her life that she had eaten a meal from under her grandfather's roof. The happiness, the comfort, and domestic love which presided over the table of the humble artisan—for the Gurton's, father and son, were only weavers—interested her. She could not avoid comparing their home of affection with her own solitary habitation. The contrast was both a painful and humiliating one.

"And so you are old Peter's granddaughter!" observed the elder boy, who had been for some time silently regarding her, as they were seated at tea; "ain't you afraid of him?"

Martha did not ask why she should be afraid of him—her heart foreboded the reply. She contented herself by merely observing that he was her grandfather.

"Well!" said the lad, who was a sturdy, manly fellow, about fourteen, "the neighbors may say what they like of Peter Quin—I dare say it is all true enough; but I will never believe any harm of you—I am sure you cannot be wicked!"

His parents sharply reproved him for his freedom—which they saw had deeply pained their guest. His mother attempted to excuse it by observing, with more bluntness than tact, that "Jack had always been taught to speak the truth!"

When Martha arose to depart, she would have taken her wet dress with her. Mrs. Gurton proposed to send it in the morning, and receive back her own. Nothing could equal the astonishment of the artisan's wife when her visitor quietly informed her that, having no other, she could not leave without it.

"No other!" repeated Mrs. Gurton, raising her hands in pity and surprise; "your grandfather so rich too! Well, I must say there is not another young woman of your age that would put up with it! Why, everybody knows that your mother brought a fortune when she married; not that anything Peter does ——"

"Hush, Peggy!" interrupted her husband; "it is no affair of yours!"

"Did you know my mother?" inquired their visitor, anxiously—for, singularly enough, she was a stranger even to her name—Peter Quin invariably chiding her, if ever she ventured to question him upon the subject. The weaver's wife looked at her husband, who made her a sign to be silent. The fact was, he did not like to meddle in any matters which concerned his landlord, who was feared as well as hated, from his vindictive spirit.

Martha repeated her question.

"You had better inquire of your grandfather, young lady," observed the master of the house; "he will doubtless inform you of all he wishes you to know. We are poor people, and have no wish to meddle in affairs which no longer concern us!"

Finding that for the present she must abandon all hope of obtaining the information she desired, the agent's daughter took her leave, promising to bring back the things she had borrowed in the morning, when she trusted to find Mrs. Gurton alone.

Although she had seen so little of the world, Martha Quin had tact enough to know that she would be more likely to obtain her desire in the absence than in the presence of the weaver, who for some reason known best to himself, had evidently made up his mind to keep a still tongue upon the subject.

Her first care on reaching her solitary home—which after the scene of domestic comfort she had quitted appeared lonely and wretched to her—was to close the iron-bound shutters and bar up the house for the night. That done, she made a fire in the little parlor and office, and prepared to dry her clothes.

"Those poor people are happy!" she mentally exclaimed. "True, they work for their daily food, but then those they love share their labor and partake of its fruits."

Her thoughts next reverted to the allusion which had been made to her mother, and the desire to learn something of the parent whose very name had been so sedulously kept from her grew strong within her.

"I am no longer a child," she muttered, "and have a right to the explanation he withholds. Perhaps I am not his grandchild," she added, struck by a sudden suspicion. "Heaven grant it! how gladly would I welcome poverty, the most obscure lot, to know myself unconnected by blood with the bold, bad man who calls himself my grandfather!"

Her meditations were broken by a sharp, loud knocking at the door. The solitary inmate of the house started, reflected for an instant, and then recollected that it was the night she had been told to expect the arrival of the captain with an infant, which she was to take charge of till the return of Peter Quin.

Martha required no light to guide her footsteps—she could have traced her way to any part of the house blindfolded. Carefully withdrawing the bolts, she partially opened the door, for the strong iron chain still remained a sufficient barrier between herself and any grown up person whom she might not think proper to admit.

As she suspected, it was the man with the stolen infant.

"Quick!" said he, "open the door—there are persons in the street observing me!"

"It opens no wider for any one this *night!" replied the* woman, with an involuntary shudder—*for the* bold, licentious gaze of the ruffian had frequently startled her.

"Your grandfather expects me!"

"He bade me say he could not see you till the morning. So, if you have anything to leave, give it me, and depart at once!"

The fellow gnashed his teeth and silently cursed her. By some means or other he had been made acquainted with the absence of Peter Quin, and contemplated putting in execution a project he had long since formed of freeing himself from the slavery in which that worthy person so long had held him, by robbing the house of certain proofs which at any time would have sent him to the scaffold—which proofs, he well knew, the agent had by him.

"This is folly!" he said; "I must speak with you!"

"Speak!" said Martha, calmly.

"I shall have the watch upon me!"

"It will be your own fault," answered the girl—who felt more and more the necessity of keeping the chain between them—"not mine! You might as well preach to the stones, man of blood and crime," she added, "as seek to shake my resolution! I know you: and those who once obtain that knowledge, are worse than fools to trust to you! Give me your burthen, or depart at once."

"Take it, then, in the fiend's name!" exclaimed the captain, thrusting the infant between the half-open door; "I believe the brat is either dead or senseless for want of food. As for the suspicions you have formed, you know you wrong me—I would not harm a hair of your head—I love you too well for that!"

With a gesture of ineffable disgust at the idea of the speaker entertaining a thought of what he was pleased to designate his love towards her, Martha received the child, which was still enveloped in the shawl; and, after once more securing the door, retired with her burthen to the parlor.

On removing the covering she at first thought the infant was dead; nor was it till she had chafed its tender limbs for some time before the fire, that a faint cry undeceived her. Fortunately there was some milk in the house, which the agent's daughter had reserved for her supper; this she hastily warmed and fed the little stranger with. It ate it eagerly—looking up in her pale face from time to time with a faint smile.

The solitary creature experienced a strange gush of tenderness in her heart as the orphan nestled closely to her breast, and fell into a gentle sleep. She felt as if Providence, in her loneliness, had sent her at last a being she could love—something which told her heart it was still human.

"Sweet innocent!" she murmured;

"doubtless it has been torn from its unhappy mother, who even now is weeping for its loss, or calling in accents of despair for her lost idol—so young—so helpless, too! Would to heaven it might remain with me! Life would not seem so perfectly a blank if I had some one to love me!"

Martha retired with the infant to her own chamber; and although unused to the office of nurse, performed its duties in undressing her with such kindness that it did not break the little stranger's sleep.

As she removed its frock, a ribbon round its neck attracted her attention. Several trinkets were attached to it. The woman carefully examined them, in the hope that they might hereafter afford some clue by which the child might be recognised and restored to its parents.

One of the trinkets was an amethyst, set as a seal. It bore both a crest and a device. The former was a greyhound couchant, and the motto "Tiens a la verite"—"Hold to the truth."

"I certainly have seen this, or one similar to it, somewhere before!" thought Martha, drawing the candle nearer, that she might examine it more closely; "it could not have been upon a letter!" she added, musingly; "for I receive none!"

After some minutes spent in reflection, she suddenly recollected that in a collection of trinkets which her grandfather kept in his cabinet, there was a watch with the same engraving and words. It was one of the many articles of value he had purchased of the captain, and more than once she had heard the old man boast that the possession of it was sufficient evidence for him to hang him if he chose.

"It is the same!" she exclaimed, with a shudder—for she surmised but too truly the fearful means by which the watch had been obtained. "How fortunate the villain did not see it!"

Therese, after the death of her sister, had found the seal in her desk; but without attaching any importance to the discovery, on the morning of her marriage she had placed the ribbon with that and the rest of the trinkets round the neck of her neice, as a plaything during her absence.

The agent's daughter revolved in her mind if there was any possible means of obtaining the watch from her grandfather's secret store. Hitherto she had been so submissive—shown so little curiosity respecting his proceedings—that the old man never considered her presence in the house as a restraint upon him. She knew where he concealed his keys, and, in the hope that he had not taken them with him, hastily left the room and descended to the parlor.

She found it, as she expected, in the recess so cunningly contrived in the floor beneath the table. It was the first time in her life she had ever ventured upon anything like an act of disobedience or deceit, and her hand trembled so violently as she thrust the key into the old-fashioned cabinet, that she had to make the attempt twice before she succeeded in turning it.

"As I said!" she murmured, at the same time drawing forth the watch; "the very words and design!" She did not call it a crest—probably being ignorant of the meaning of the word.

In the same drawer was a printed paper, carefully folded, and marked "important" on the back. This Martha also possessed herself of, and retreated hastily to her own room, pursued by her fears.

"Heaven will pardon me!" she murmured; it sees the motive of my conduct! Besides, I can replace them before he returns!"

The paper marked important, in the handwriting of Peter Quin, was neither a bank bill, bond, or deed; but simply a description of the person of a gentleman who had disappeared, to the grief and surprise of his family, and offering a large reward for any intelligence respecting him.

Persons who could furnish any were directed to apply to Mr. Foster, Solicitor, Inner Temple.

Martha carefully copied it, word for word, in her large, clerk-like hand; and, sewing it with the trinkets and ribbons in the mattress of her bed, prepared to retire to rest. She would willingly have added the watch, but dared not—her terror of her grandfather was too great: he would be sure to miss it.

Having accomplished her task, the poor, timid creature retired to rest, but not to sleep. The events of the day had too much excited her. Daylight began to peep through the casement of her chamber before her busy, o'erwrought brain permitted her to taste the repose she so much needed.

Martha's first care the following morning was to replace the watch and paper in the cabinet, and return the key to its hiding-place. That done, she prepared breakfast for herself and the little stranger in whose welfare she had taken such a sudden and novel interest. No wonder: the orphan was something for her to love—to lavish the long-suppressed affections of her heart upon.

"Could I but retain the infant with me," she repeated several times to herself, as she regarded Fanny, "life would not appear so desolate!"

Just as the repast was finished, there was a knocking at the door. The visitor proved to be no other than her acquaintance of the preceding day, Mrs. Gurton, the wife of her grandfather's tenant.

The woman had called for the clothes

she had lent her. "Passing that way," she observed, "she was willing to spare Miss Quin the trouble of bringing them.

Martha was sufficiently a woman of the world to judge that curiosity had at least as much to do with her visit as politeness. It was something gratifying to the weaver's wife to penetrate into the interior of a house whose doors had so long been closed against the world.

"It is a dull place!" quietly observed the agent's grand-daughter, noticing that Mrs. Gurton was leisurely taking a survey of the wretched furniture of the room.

"Nothing changed, I perceive!" replied the woman; "the same chairs and tables! I could almost fancy that I recognize the old cobwebs upon the ceiling and walls—the clock down, too!"

Martha naturally felt surprised at a remark which implied a former and intimate acquaintance with the place; she recollected how the weaver had checked the loquacity of his wife the preceding day, when speaking of her parents.

"It is not your first visit here, then?"

"I should think not!" exclaimed Mrs. Gurton, with a significant smile. "I will wager my best shawl that I could name every article in the rooms above—from the Indian chintz furniture to the curious old cabinet in your grandfather's bed-room—in which, they do say," she added, lowering her voice, "he keeps more gold and notes than are to be found in the Bank of England!"

At the mention of the cabinet, her hearer changed color; she almost expected the speaker to allude to her own visit to it.

"Did you ever hear your grandfather speak of Mary Bright?" continued her visitor.

"Never."

"Well, I don't wonder at it!" added the weaver's wife, bitterly; "few persons like to mention those they have wronged—and Peter Quin, after all, has, I suppose, some conscience, though it is difficult to believe it, after the state I find you in!"

"Pray explain yourself!" said Martha, taking her hand; "you alluded yesterday to my mother! Alas! I never even heard her name! I am ignorant if I have a relative in the world except my grandfather!"

"Plenty of relatives," interrupted Mrs. Gurton, "who ought to feel proud to own you—for I begin to think that Peter has not corrupted your heart!"

"You knew my mother?"

"I nursed her," resumed the woman; "of course I was a mere girl then! Her husband—Peter's son—was just dead, and *you an infant about six months old! Poor thing! The loss of your father* broke her heart—at least, so it was said; but I always had *my own opinion upon that point!*"

The forlorn being who, for the first time in her life, was listening to these details of her family, shuddered. It was in vain that she intreated the speaker to explain herself. The woman shook her head, and muttered something about getting into trouble and the anger of her husband, if it should reach his ears.

"As for the rest," she said, speaking more plainly, "you have a right to know, and I will tell you! Peter Quin and his son were partners; but it was a different sort of trade, I believe, they followed then! When your father died, he left everything to his widow and child—that I know; for I well remember the fury of your grandfather, when he discovered that she had proved the will!"

"Then I am not dependent upon him for my daily bread?" exclaimed Martha, eagerly.

"Dependent upon him—no more than I am!" replied her informant. "You are rich—or at least ought to be! The rest is soon told! From the day of the quarrel between Peter Quin and his daughter-in-law, the latter gradually sickened. The doctors, not knowing what was the matter with her, just called it a broken heart—and the world believed it!"

"*Did you believe it?*" demanded the grand-daughter of the agent, placing her hand upon her arm, and looking anxiously into her face.

"It matters little what I believed now!" answered the woman, evasively; "when your poor mother was dying, she told me, in the presence of Peter Quin, that she had provided for me—for I had served her faithfully; but I never received one farthing!"

"How so?"

"The will could not be found!" replied the weaver's wife; "doubtless it fell into your grandfather's hands, who had his reasons for suppressing it! And now, my dear young lady, you know all that I can tell you!"

"Except the name of my mother!"

"Ah, true—true—she was the daughter of a Spanish merchant, named Mendez! Some people said that she was a Jewess; others a gipsy; but I never believed them! She must have been a good Christian," added the speaker; "for I have heard her for hours praying in her native tongue over the cradle in which you were sleeping!"

Tears chased each other down the cheeks of Martha, on hearing that she had been the object of so much affection. It was soothing to her to know that she had been once loved, even though it was not a memory to her.

"Now," said Mrs. Gurton, rising to depart, "I have said my say! You know all that I can tell you, and it will be your own fault if you suffer Peter Quin to keep you in poverty and misery any longer! If there is anything I can do for you by day or by night, you may command me—and my husband, too, for the matter of that," added the speaker; "we have not forgotten that, but for you, our trip yesterday might have ended sadly!"

"I must think—reflect!" muttered the grand-daughter of the agent; "for I have no friends to counsel me!"

"But you have that which will procure them?"

Martha looked at her doubtingly.

"Money!" continued the speaker; "at least you can have it—and that is much the same thing! But whatever you do," she added, lowering her voice, as if she feared the echoes of that lonely chamber would repeat her words, "act cautiously—and, above all, *suddenly!* Never let Peter Quin suspect you meditate raising your hand till you have struck the blow!"

"And why not?" demanded his grand-daughter, wishing to feel assured that she perfectly comprehended the nature of her caution.

"Why? Nothing—no reason in particular!" answered her visitor, in a tone of affected carelessness; "I merely meant that those who deal with your grandfather cannot be too much on their guard!"

CHAPTER XV.

Experience teacheth us
That resolution's a sole help at need.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE information which the weaver's wife had given her respecting the past, so studiously kept hidden from her by the agent, caused his grand-daughter to ponder deeply. For the first time in her life, she felt an inclination to resist the degrading tyranny to which she had for so many years been the drudge—the slave. Neither was the woman's caution forgotten—it weighed like a nightmare upon the heart of the desolate Martha. It implied a suspicion, if not a knowledge of some crime committed by Peter Quin, which she shuddered to speculate upon.

"Would I knew more or less!" she repeated several times to herself during the day; "afraid as he is, I would not, even in thought, do him an injustice by supposing ——"

She hesitated, and the half spoken sentence died upon her lips.

When the agent returned, his first inquiry was for the child. The instant he beheld it, he regarded it with a bitter scowl, although he expressed the greatest satisfaction that the captain had succeeded in executing his orders. The terrified infant clung screaming to the bosom of Martha, whom she already recognised with smiles of infantine affection.

"You terrify her!" observed his grand-daughter, drawing Fanny yet closer to her.

"Pooh!" said the old man angrily; "children are not so easily frightened! She will soon get accustomed to my manner!"

Martha was delighted with this response: it implied that for some time at least the little stranger was to remain with them; but she prudently abstained from asking him any questions upon the subject. It was the only way to avoid exciting his suspicions.

His next inquiries were respecting his clients, as he termed them; satisfied that nothing of importance had occurred during his absence, he directed his grand-daughter to prepare his supper, and retired to see that everything was safe in the office.

Satisfied, apparently, with the examination, he returned in unusual good humor, made a hearty meal, and even carried his extravagance so far as to open a bottle of wine—a luxury he rarely indulged in.

Suddenly looking up, he noticed that Martha—who was seated near the fire-place with Fanny, who had fallen asleep upon her lap—had her eyes fixed upon him with an expression which he had never noticed before.

"What, in the fiend's name," he exclaimed, "is the fool staring at?"

"I was thinking," replied the poor girl, "how closely this infant's fate resembles mine!"

"How so?"

"We neither of us are ever likely to learn the name of the mother who bore us!"

"Will not mine content you?" demanded the aged ruffian, with a sneer; "many would only be too glad to bear it—to stand as near to me as you do in blood as well as affection!"

At the word "affection," his grand-daughter gave a sickly smile. It was little of affection that she had ever known during her solitary existence.

A sudden suspicion crossed the brain of Peter Quin.

"You have had a visitor?" he said, eyeing her sternly.

"I might have had!" answered Martha, warily; "but, thank heaven, I kept the

chain between us! The captain, when he brought the infant, tried by surprise, entreaty, and at last by menaces, to enter the house; he talked of his love for me—but the bait was too palpable for me to catch at! He must have suspected," she added, "that you were from home!"

"Not unlikely—not unlikely!" repeated the agent, musingly; "that's his game—is it? We shall see—we shall see!"

The sinister smile which accompanied the half-muttered words made his grand-daughter shudder. She recollected the watch and the paper, and doubted not that the thoughts of the speaker referred to them.

"You are not angry with me?" she observed, submissively.

"No—no!" replied the old man, sharply; "you acted rightly in keeping him on the outside of the door; and still more wisely in telling me what had taken place! The captain is a fine gentleman—a bold fellow, likely to catch a woman's fancy—earns a great deal of money, too, *in his way!* So, if you really like him, I don't see why——"

Although Martha knew that this was merely a *ruse* to sound her inclination, she could not repress the feeling of disgust and horror which the idea of her entertaining a thought of the ruffian conjured up.

"You mean it as a jest!" she said; "but it is a cruel one! I shall never, with your consent, become the wife of any man!"

"I am not so sure of that!" interrupted Peter.

"Be that as it may," she continued, "I would a thousand times rather die than wed the man you name—for there is no pollution in the grave!"

"Well—well!", muttered the agent, in a satisfied tone—for he felt convinced that he had nothing to fear from the courtship of the captain—"it has not come to that yet! He shall annoy you no more!"

"You do not know him!"

"*You do not know me!*" replied the old man, fiercely; "or the means by which I work my ends! I am old, feeble—my body is bent—and my limbs totter as I walk the street; but my brain is young—active as ever! If I have no longer the lion's strength, I at least possess the serpent's craft! No being," he continued, in a tone of triumph—for the wine had made him unusually garrulous—"ever crossed my path, that I did not find some means to remove him!"

Martha turned very pale. She remembered the half-spoken hints of the weaver's wife, and thought of her dead mother. A sickening sensation came over her. She looked towards the door, as if she would have fled from the room.

"*Well!*" *he exclaimed*, "what ails you now? You could not appear more frightened if you were caged with a tiger!"

"Nothing, grandfather—nothing!" she faltered, making a violent effort to appear collected; "you forget that for five days I have been left alone—and solitude breeds strange fancies! My nights have been sleepless, and my days lonely and wretched! I would have given something to have heard even the sound of your voice: and yet I have seldom heard it," she added, with a sigh, "unless in accents of harshness and reproof!"

"Your own fault!" grumbled the agent; "you are so infernally like your mother!"

"Is that a crime?" demanded Martha.

"Well, no—not exactly a crime; but I had rather you had been like any one else! Like most of her sex, she was wayward and obstinate—thwarted me, and——there, let us change the subject! I hate to speak or think of her!"

For several minutes the old man sat with his eyes gloomily fixed upon the table. Suddenly, as if stung by some painful recollection, he poured out a tumbler of wine, drained it off, dashed the glass underneath the grate, and left the room.

For more than an hour afterwards his grand-daughter heard him pacing up and down the office.

"Would to heaven!" she murmured, "that the woman had spoken plain or been dumb for ever! What a life henceforth must be mine! The suspicion of a crime I dare not name will haunt me like a shadow! God!" she added wildly, and speaking aloud; "to pass long years to come alone with him—to hear the stealthy, solitary step—to catch the eyes of the man glaring on me who murdered—I shall go mad—mad," she repeated, "if I continue to think of it!"

The wretched woman felt that she had excited the suspicions of her grandfather. She remembered the caution of Mrs. Gurton, and came to the conclusion that the utmost circumspection alone could dissipate them.

With this intention, she carefully replaced the fragments of the repast, as if nothing unusual had occurred, extinguished the fire remaining in the grate, lit her candle, and retired for the night, bearing the still sleeping infant with her.

As she entered her room, she heard the door of the office below cautiously opened. She knew the agent was listening; the unhappy woman longed to bar the door of her chamber, but dared not, lest he should hear her.

It was well that Martha did not [illegible] to her terrors—for during the [illegible] she heard the latch of her bed-room door gently raised. It was evidently done with the in-

tention of ascertaining whether it had been bolted or not—for instantly afterwards she detected the footsteps of her grandfather moving cautiously away.

From that night, the suspicion that her mother had been foully dealt with became a rooted conviction; and yet the following day she met the man she looked upon as a murderer with her usual cold, apathetic demeanor. What could she do—alone in the world—no proof—no friend to aid or counsel her?

Three years passed on, and the orphan Fanny still continued an inmate of the agent's house. Scarcely a day elapsed that the old man, who noticed with singular dissatisfaction the strong affection which existed between his grand-daughter and the child, did not threaten to send the "brat" away.

Martha got so used to the menace at last, that it ceased to alarm her. She was no longer the desolate, submissive being of her early days; she had something to love and live for—love had given her strength; and she mentally vowed, as she gazed upon the child so strangely confided to her care, that not even her grandfather's resolve should separate them.

She had yet to learn the length to which he was capable of being urged by his evil nature. Although his strength had abandoned him, and he was so weak that an infant might have mastered him, the brain of Peter Quin was healthy and active as ever.

Whatever his original intentions were in keeping Fanny under his roof, they had long ceased to actuate him. Probably the hatred he entertained to the unoffending child induced the old man to abandon them, and he began to look upon her as an incumbrance.

It was little that her protectress knew—but that little she taught the child. There was something touching in the sight of the affectionate woman gathering up the backs of letters and such scraps of paper as she could find in the office, to set her pupil writing lessons upon. She even carried her desire so far as to entreat her grandfather to purchase a copy-book for her: but the fury with which her request was received prevented her ever repeating it.

Money of her own she had not.

Although unable to clothe her little favorite, except in the veriest rags, Martha kept her scrupulously neat. If her frock was patched, it was clean; as for bonnet or shoes, she had neither. Many a weary night had the affectionate woman laid awake pondering in her mind how she might procure them; accident enabled her at last to gratify her wish—but little did she dream the misery it would occasion her.

One morning, during breakfast, the agent informed her that he expected a gentleman to call whom she was at once to show into the office.

"But how am I know him?" she asked.

"Most likely he will give you his name!" replied the old man; "it is Foster, the great lawyer from the Inner Temple! Why, what are you staring and looking so surprised at?"

"I—nothing! only that you generally do not receive such visitors!" observed his grand-daughter evasively—for she had recognised the name as that of the gentleman referred to in the paper in the cabinet.

"How do you know what sort of visitors I receive?" demanded Peter Quin, sharply; "you think I am growing old! You presume—but I shall live years—years," he added, "to plague you; and even when I do die, may find means to disappoint you of my money!"

"I do not think of it!" replied Martha. "Money! I scarcely know its use!"

"It's a lie! You do think of it—you dream of it!" exclaimed the wretched man, "I have seen you watching my steps as they became more feeble—counting the days I have to live! but I am not old here!" he continued, touching his forehead sarcastically; "young—young as ever! *I shall bury you yet!* and send the brat you hope to enrich when I am gone, to the workhouse!"

"God forgive you for that thought!" answered Martha, roused by a feeling of indignation from her usual submissive manner; "it is not enough to have blighted my whole existence, but you would destroy hers?"

"Insolent!" said the agent, with a burst of fury; "I have kept you both too long from charity!"

This was more than even the patience of the long-suffering martyr could endure. She had long ceased to care or feel for herself—but she had now some one to love and to protect; for the first time she forgot the prudence and the restraint of years.

"Charity!" she repeated; "does not the word blister your tongue? You know that it is false—you know that the fortune you have robbed me of was ample!"

The countenance of Peter Quin underwent a sudden change. The pupils of his small grey eyes contracted as he fixed them upon her with an ironical expression.

"Pray proceed!" he said.

'I have been patient, where others would have braved you!" continued his grand-daughter: "for I remembered the tie of blood between us—do not force me to forget it!"

"Have you finished?" demanded the old

man. "If you have, hear me! That brat quits my house this very day.

He pointed as he spoke to the terrified Fanny, who clung to the side of her protectress, to hide herself from the fierce, vindictive looks of the speaker.

"And if she does," replied Martha, calmly, "I will go with her!"

"Where?"

The friendless, desolate creature clasped her hands and burst into tears. Where could she go—without one friend in the world, or a shilling? Who would receive or shelter her?

"Where?" repeated the agent, with a chuckle—for he doubted not that he had humbled her at last. "Minion, you thought to brave me! Ha, ha! I'll wring your very heart for this!"

There was a knocking at the door.

"Answer it!" he added.

"Pardon!" exclaimed the wretched woman, sinking on her knees and attempting to grasp the withered hand of her tyrant—which he impatiently drew from her: "promise me that you will not separate us; she is the only tie which binds me to existence! I will be humble as a child—work, drudge, without complaining—only promise me that she shall remain!"

"Well, well!" said the old man, affecting to appear moved—"we shall see! Go!" he repeated; "it is the visitor I expect!"

Taking the weeping Fanny with her, Martha left the room, aud presently returned, ushering in the expected visitor—Mr. Foster, the lawyer of the Inner Temple—a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, with a benevolent, but shrewd cast of countenance, apparently about fifty years of age.

After an hour had elapsed, the bell of the parlor rang—and Martha, hastily drying her tears, answered it.

"Do you know Parliament Street?" inquired the lawyer.

"The street at the foot of the bridge, to the left!" said the agent, in a harsh tone.

She answered in the affirmative.

"Go, then," said Mr. Foster, "to No. 17—you will see parchments and books in the window; you cannot mistake the shop. Give this note, and be careful of the papers they send in return."

Anxious to give her grandfather no further cause of offence, the poor creature hastily put on her faded shawl and bonnet, and ran rather than walked, to execute her commission. When she returned, she was quite out of breath.

"Thank you!" said the gentleman, with a smile; "quite correct!" he added, after examining the packet she had handed to him; "that will do!" As she left the room, she heard Peter Quin mutter something about stamps.

The business being concluded, doubtless to the satisfaction of both parties, Mr. Foster left the house. Martha, as usual, let him out; as she closed the door, the gentleman slipped half a sovereign into her hand. It was the first time in her life she had ever possessed such a sum of her own. Her joy was unbounded—for it enabled her to put her long-cherished wish into execution, of providing shoes, &c., for her adopted child; but weeks elapsed before she ventured to carry out her intention, so great was her terror of her tyrant.

Peter Quin was one of those cold, calculating men, whose blows are never seen, but felt. He loved to brood over his plans in silence; like the viper he was slow in gathering his venom—but its effects were equally deadly.

When Martha trusted that his anger had blown over, she ventured on her meditated purchase. The old man smiled bitterly the first time he saw the infant object of his hatred attired in her new frock and shoes; and he sarcastically demanded where the money for such a piece of foolish extravagance came from.

His grand-daughter tremblingly explained.

"Humph!" muttered the agent. "Foster is a fool, who has more money than wit: but I suppose he charged it to his client's account—and you might have expended it more wisely than upon that brat, who has eaten my bread too long! But I have no time," he added, "to think either of her or you at present! I must go to the City, and take Miles with me! Send for him!"

Miles was the name of the man who conducted the lodging-house adjoining. For years he been the tool and factotum of his employer, who valued him as such men value the ready instrument of any act of villany. Like most of his dependents, he was completely in the power of the agent, who frequently vented his spleen by reminding him that he could hang him whenever he chose.

Miles had a good memory, and never forgot his threats.

Shortly afterwards they left the house together. Martha saw them depart with pleasure: she imagined that Peter had forgotten his former menace respecting the orphan Fanny.

CHAPTER XVI.

Oh, there is danger
When a villain smiles
SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the agent returned from his visit to the City, he appeared in great good humor; ostentatiously counted several notes in the presence of his grand-daughter; then thrust them, with an air of satisfaction, into one of his capacious pockets. Had Martha seen more of the world, she would at once have suspected him. To any one but herself, the scene would have appeared over-acted.

"Sit down!" said the old man; "we must have some talk together! You need not be afraid!" he added, as the anxious woman silently obeyed him; it's not about the child you are so infatuated with that I am going to speak!"

Martha drew Fanny upon her knees and kissed her.

"I have been thinking," continued the hypocrite, "that I am not so young as I was; my health as well as strength is failing! The best of us, I suspect, have but a queer account to make up; in short, I am resolved to strike a balance with the world, and quit this place!"

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the poor girl; "I have never known a happy hour in it!"

A scowl flitted an instant over the harsh features of her grandfather, but disappeared as quickly as it came. He was a finished actor, and it was his cue to appear if not amiable, at least less harsh than usual.

"I have heard of a place a few miles from town. To-morrow I am going to visit it—so let me have breakfast an hour earlier! Since you have not been happy here, you can have but little regret at leaving!"

"None!" exclaimed Martha, eagerly; "for there is no solitude so dreadful as the sense of loneliness in the midst of our fellow-creatures! In this gloomy place I am haunted by a thousand terrors! I sometimes imagine that I see pale faces glaring at me from the walls, or in the dimly-lighted chamber where I sleep! One might almost imagine some crime had been committed there!"

Had the speaker been less excited by the hope of quitting the house which from childhood had been a prison rather than a home to her, she must have noticed how the countenance of Peter Quin turned pale when she alluded to some crime having been perpetrated in the place.

"Besides," she continued, "I shall see the green fields and the flowers, of which I have heard so much—listen to the music of the *birds—breathe the pure air of heaven!* Yes," she added, with a faint smile; "I shall feel happy—truly happy—when I depart from here!"

"Very well!" observed the agent, drily, "in ten days we both leave!"

"We *both* leave!" repeated Martha, looking at him imploringly; "*both!* And Fanny—the poor, motherless child—she will accompany us? You do not mean to separate me from her?"

"You will have enough to do in your new home without her ——"

"Grandfather," said the poor creature interrupting him, "unsay those cruel words: it is the first favor I ever asked you! You know that I would rather remain here a thousand times than part with her! If my faults have been many, they have been those of ignorance; and my pleasures," she added, "have at least been few!"

"That's true!" said the old man, apparently struck by the truth of the observation; "therefore you may keep the brat, since you so ardently desire it; but remember that for the future I expect no repining—no grumbling! It is not often," he added, "that I change my resolution; but for once ——well, there—I have said it!"

Martha was all joy and gratitude; for the first time in her life, she felt something approaching to a sentiment of kindness towards her grandfather. Little did the poor deceived dupe imagine that the hypocrite was only acting a part with her.

A weight, a cloud, which for weeks had hung like a shadow over her, disappeared from her heart; it was like a ray of sunshine peering through the dreary fogs of November, or the first flower of spring too long delayed. Frequently during the rest of the day, when the cold eye of the agent was no longer upon her, she clasped the little orphan to her bosom, and covered her innocent cheek with kisses.

Few would have imagined how deep the fountain of sympathy and affection which was concealed under her usually calm, subdued exterior.

At any early hour the following morning, the chaise which Peter Quin had ordered drove up to the door, he bade Martha adieu in a tone of unusual cordiality—nay, even carried his duplicity so far as to pat her *protegee* upon the head, as the child stood holding by the gown of her protectress in the passage, to see him depart.

"He has some heart!" thought the poor deceived creature, with a feeling of gratitude; "it is not all of clay!"

Martha began picturing to herself the happiness of a life in the country—the pure air, the green fields—so different from the close, stifling neighborhood from which she had scarcely stirred during her monotonous

existence. How Fanny, too, she thought, would enjoy them. She fancied that she saw the child sporting in the balmy sunshine, drawing health and strength from the invigorating atmosphere.

Her brief reveries were interrupted by a knock at the door.

It was the driver of the chaise.

"The old gentleman has forgotten a packet upon the table in the office," said the man; "he bade me tell you to bring it to him."

There was nothing to excite the suspicions of the forlorn being, who was sufficiently acquainted with the nature of Peter Quin's affairs to understand that he might not wish that a stranger even for an instant should hold any papers belonging to him in his possession.

"Directly!" she exclaimed.

"He is in a deuce of a hurry!" observed the driver; "one would imagine it contained half the notes in the Bank of England!"

"Where is he?"

"Only at the foot of the bridge!"

Martha entered the office, and discovered upon the desk a packet carefully sealed. In her anxiety to please her persecutor, she did not wait even to put on her bonnet and shawl.

"I shall be back in an instant, darling!" she said, kissing the child; "wait for me at the door; but mind, no further!"

Following the rapid steps of the messenger, she speedily reached the bridge, where Peter Quin was quietly waiting in the chaise: a satirical smile played for an instant on his thin, shrivelled lips, as he saw her approaching without Fanny in her arms; he saw that his artifice had succeeded.

Muttering something like thanks, he thrust the packet into his pocket, observing that he should not return till evening.

"Have tea ready," he added; "and—let me see——"

"There is cold meat in the house!" interrupted his grand-daughter, impatiently—for she had begun to feel anxious respecting Fanny.

The old man decided at last upon what he would have when he came back. The important point settled, his grand-daughter started on her return. She had not proceeded many yards before he called her back, under pretence of giving her some charge respecting the house.

All this was merely to gain time for the execution of the heartless vengeance he had long brooded over.

"You may go now!" be said, with a sinister sneer; "I have no wish to detain you *any longer*!"

The sneer excited the suspicions of *Martha. Without a word of* adieu, she hastened back to the home from which she had been so cleverly lured. The child was no longer there; every room was explored She called upon her in the most endearing accents—but no voice replied to her. All was silent, except the beatings of her own desolate heart: she almost heard them.

"Monster!" she exclaimed, sinking in a chair and bursting into a passionate flood of tears; "life had one solace—and he has torn it from me! Fool that I was to be deceived—to trust my treasure an instant from my sight! Lost—lost to me forever!"

How frequently do we see the most timid natures undergo a sudden and complete change. The parent bird, which flies at the approach of the hawk, becomes bold when she has her young ones to defend. The heart of the agent's grand-daughter experienced one of those sudden revulsions which turns the plastic clay to granite.

"It is the moment for action!" she said, drying her tears with the corner of her checked apron; "not for grief! I shall have time enough to lament her in the sad hours of the future! Fool!" she repeated, bitterly; "fool, to be so duped—warned as I was, too, by one who knew his evil nature!"

This was in allusion to the caution which the weaver's wife had given her—that if ever the tyranny of Peter Quin drove her to a rupture, whatever she resolved to do she should do suddenly.

The trace of grief upon the mourner's features gradually gave way to an expression of cold and setted determination. After having fully decided upon the means she would pursue, she rose from her seat in the kitchen and secured the street door; that done, she entered the little parlor, raised the trap beneath the desk, and possessed herself of the keys of the cabinet, as well as a species of register which Peter Quin kept of the various transactions in which he had been engaged.

"I can hang the villain, if I choose!" she murmured, after having hastily glanced over a few of the pages; "he shall restore to me my darling, or——God help me!" she added, with a shudder, as reflection interposed and prevented the completion of the sentence; "to what extremities do not our evil passions drive us!"

Every drawer and recess in the old cabinet was scrupulously examined; there were bonds, bills, and securities whose destruction would have rejoiced the heart of many an unfortunate creditor or spendthrift heir. Martha thought but little of these; although strongly tempted to secure the watch and paper—which evidently were connected in some way with the mystery of the orphan's birth—she prudently ab-

stained; it would have placed her in the power of her oppressor. In the act of closing one of the drawers, she fancied that the side of the cabinet into which it fitted was of a different thickness from the corresponding one; a more minute examination convinced her that she was right. After a long and tedious search, she at last discovered the means of opening a secret depository, artfully contrived in the thickness of the cabinet work.

It contained two papers, labelled, in the handwriting of Peter Quin, "To be destroyed before my death."

One was a letter from his son, imploring him to act justly by his widow and orphan.

"Justly!" repeated Martha, bitterly; "as well might he have recommended the dove to the mercy of the vulture—the lamb to the pity of the wolf! His own son, too!"

The second paper was a document of far greater importance—the will of her mother—bequeathing her to the guardianship of Gabriel Mendez, her brother, a Spanish merchant, in the city. There was a singular clause, by which the testatrix stipulated that, on attaining the age of twenty-one, her daughter should obtain the royal leave to assume the name of Mendez, instead of Quin.

We need not inform our readers how the agent succeeded in suppressing the will of his daughter-in-law; his son's had been proved at his death—so that the old man's object must have been merely to retain the right of guardianship which he had so cruelly abused over his grand-daughter; the property, interest and principal, it was impossible for him to touch, unless by forgery, which in the days of George III. was invariably punished by death.

It would be difficult to describe the varied emotions of Martha Quin as she perused and re-perused the proofs of her grandfather's cupidity and cruelty. She was rich—and yet her days had been passed in the most abject poverty and wretchedness. She understood at last why she had been systematically secluded from the world—kept in ignorance of its usages; her youth withered like a weed in some dark vault or den, which the genial rain and sunshine never reached!

"He shall give her back to me!" she exclaimed, in a tone of triumph, as she secured the papers, with the private register of Peter Quin; "and disgorge his ill-gotten wealth! How the fiend he has served will yell to see the crushed serpent writhing in impotent fury—his fangs drawn, his venom hurtless!"

At first she thought of seeking a temporary shelter with the weaver and his family—but a little reflection convinced her that they were not the sort of people to protect her from the machinations of the agent; her ideas next reverted to the lawyer in the Inner Temple: the mild manner in which he had spoken to her, and his appearance, had inspired the desolate creature with a certain degree of confidence.

Still she resolved to await the return of her grandfather, to learn, if possible, something of the fate of Fanny, in whom her affections were so centred that she would willingly have resigned everything to obtain her restoration.

"I must be guarded with him," she said, "and meet art with art!"

When Peter Quin returned, he was astonished at the calm with which Martha received him: he had expected to find her in tears—possibly to listen to her reproaches or entreaties; they would have been music to him—for, like most men who have committed a crime, he hated her whom he had so cruelly injured. Instead of which he found his tea prepared for him, and not a word either of complaint or expostulation.

The meal passed in silence, which he broke, when he had concluded, by sarcastically observing how very quiet the place appeared.

"It will be more so soon!" was the reply; "since I, too, shall leave it!"

"You? Bah!"

"I am serious!"

"And where will you go to?" demanded the aged ruffian, with a chuckle.

"To seek my child! Heaven will guide me! It is time, grandfather, that we clearly understood each other!"

There was something in the tone of the speaker which aroused the worst passions of Peter's nature. It was not exactly defiance, but the consciousness of power which it expressed. He felt disappointed, too, at her firmness: he had counted on her tears.

"It is time that you understood me!" he exclaimed, striking his clenched hand upon the table. "The brat is gone where you will never see or hear of her again! I have taken my measures too well for that! I generally find the means of removing those who cross my path!" he added, with a leer.

It was the second time he had made that boast. Martha thought of her mother, and the vague hints which the weaver's wife had thrown out respecting her early death; but, instead of intimidating her, it filled her heart with additional courage and energy.

"Where is she?" she demanded.

"Perhaps at the bottom of the Thames!" replied the old man, brutally; "perhaps sold to the gipsies! Where, you will never learn!"

"No—no!" said the horror-stricken woman; "bad as you are, you would not have a second murder on your soul!"

Peter turned very pale, and his eye rested for an instant on a knife remaining on the table.

"Restore her to me!" exclaimed the speaker, "as you value the rest of your miserable days!" I am desperate, and armed with a power you dream not of. If a hair of that child's head has been harmed, monster, I will break the tie of blood between us, and drag you to the scaffold!"

"Are you mad?"

"No! I have recovered my senses!"

"And is this the reward of my charity?"

"Charity!" repeated his grand-daughter, contemptuously; "that lie will no longer serve your turn! I have learnt the nature of my claims upon the fortune of which you have despoiled me; the law will wring from your iron clutch the wealth of my dead father! But what law or justice," she continued in a tone of agony, can give me back my blighted youth—the degradation and misery you have inflicted? But I waste time in appealing to one whose heart is so hardened by avarice and cruelty, the thunderbolt alone could reach it!"

Deciding on holding no further parley with him, but to quit the house whilst it was still in her power, Martha caught up her bonnet and shawl.

"You shall not stir!" roared the agent, foaming with passion.

Without heeding him, she continued to arrange her dress, keeping a wary eye the while on his movements.

Peter Quin felt seriously alarmed. Conscience, or rather his terrors, told him that it was an affair of life and death. Unobserved, as he thought, by the now thoroughly incensed victim of his tyranny, he possessed himself of the knife, and rose from his chair. The table, fortunately, was between them.

"Shame, old man!" said his grand-daughter; "would you murder me, as you did my unhappy mother?"

Had the ruffian been struck by a sudden paralysis, it could not have produced a more marked change than her words. With every nerve unstrung, he sank back into his seat, and the weapon fell from his hand. Bitterly did he curse his failing strength; but, as he frequently boasted, his brain was as active as ever.

"Send for Miles!" he said.

Martha smiled derisively.

"He shall bring Fanny back to you! I swear it!"

"By what oath?" demanded the woman, *in a tone which told* him it was no longer *possible for him to dupe her.* "I know of none which you have not already broken! "Send for Miles!" she repeated: "that the ruffian may assist you to strangle me! I should have but a poor chance of ever quitting these walls with life, if the ready tool of your crimes were here to aid you!"

Peter Quin gnashed his teeth, and cursed with impotent fury. Bitterly did he regret that he had not long since removed her from his path. It was retribution doubly galling to feel himself crushed by the being he had for so many years regarded with contempt, considered as a mere drudge—a thing to trample and vent his spleen upon.

Desperate were the efforts which he made to rise from his chair. He felt as if spell-bound. The excitement and terror of the disclosure had so completely overwhelmed him, that he was deprived of the little strength time had left him.

"You have hitherto found me truthful!" said his grand-daughter, approaching him; "listen to my words; perhaps they are the last you will ever hear from me! If Fanny is not given into the hands of those I send by to-morrow, at noon, by every law which you have violated, you shall answer at the bar of human justice for your crimes!"

Without waiting for a reply, she left the room, and instantly quitted the house. The rain was falling in torrents, but she heeded it not; any shelter appeared preferable to the den of crime she had quitted. Of the first passenger she met she inquired the way to the Temple—for, strange to say, though she had lived all her life in London, she was as ignorant of its localities as the greatest stranger.

When Peter Quin had sufficiently recovered from the paroxysm into which anger and fear had thrown him to quit his seat, he tottered rather than walked into the passage, and secured the street door. Satisfied that he was safe for awhile at least from interruption, he next made his way into the office and examined his secret recess. The key of the cabinet was there, but the register of his crimes was gone.

"Curse her!" he exclaimed, wringing his hands; "curse her! She has me in her power! It was no idle boast that she would drag me to the scaffold! But I must see further—know the full extent of my danger—and then reflect on the means of parrying it!"

The state in which he found the cabinet completed his dismay. The secret recess as well as every drawer had been ransacked. The will and letter were both gone. Still he could not comprehend how Martha's suspicions had been excited respecting the means of her mother's death. Whether guilty or not, it was a secret which he firmly believed confined to his own breast. He

had quite forgotten the weaver's wife who had attended her.

More than once, in his despair, he thought of ending his dishonored life; but, like most tyrannical, vindictive men, he was a coward. Fearful as the present was, the grave appeared but the commencement of a yet more terrible future. Imagination pictured to him the cold, damp cell in Newgate—the trial—the hangman's gripe—and he shuddered and wept like a child.

For the first time in his life, he bitterly regretted having given way to the indulgence of his evil passions. What was the presence of the child he hated, compared to the agony he now endured?

As she said, he was completely in the power of his outraged grandchild. For many years he had regularly forged the power of attorney which enabled him to receive the dividends of her large fortune in the funds and India Stock; and, but for the necessity of her signing the transfer books, would long since have secured possession of the principal.

His only hope was, that Miles might not have executed his instructions; he had only half hinted his wishes to the wretch. In his impatience, the guilty man prayed for morning—either to confirm or dissipate his fears. With the child once more in his power, he felt that he might make terms with the deeply incensed Martha. It was his last chance. He was too old to fly. Besides, the blow was so sudden, that it left him no time to realise his ill-gotten fortune: and what would life be to him without the idol he worshipped, and for which he had sinned.

There was yet another chance which he calculated upon. Where would Martha, ignorant as she was of the world—poor and friendless—find means to pursue her claims or carry her menaces into execution against a man whose resources both of purse and craft were all but unlimited.

"I have been terrified too easily!" muttered the agent, as he at last made up his mind to snatch a few hours of repose; "let me once get her beneath my roof again, and—we shall see! I seldom lose deal twice!"

With this reflection, he threw himself upon his bed—but not to sleep. His brain was troubled. Pale faces appeared glaring upon him through the half-drawn curtains. He drew his head beneath the coverlid, and tried to shut them from his sight in vain.

"Why should I tremble so?" he exclaimed, half aloud; "I have seen them often in my dreams; these are but waking ones!"

One countenance more hideous than the rest particularly terrified him; it appeared fierce and menacing.

"It must be the hangman's!" he thought; "I wonder if ever we shall become acquainted!"

The question was one which Time, that resolver of most riddles, alone could answer.

Sleep fell upon the weary eyelids of the old man at last. He closed them, muttering to himself curses upon the grandchild whom he had so cruelly wronged, and words implying a resolution to have back the register she had taken, at any price.

When our readers reflect that it contained the details of the dark transactions in which he had been engaged, they will not wonder that the loss of it was the last thing in his thoughts as he sank to sleep, and the first when he awoke the following morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

Are not our laws alike for high and low?
Or shall we bind the poor man in his fetters,
And let the rich go revel in his crimes?
THOMSON.

MR. FOSTER had remained at his office in the Inner Temple till a much later hour than usual on the night Martha Quin escaped from the house of her grandfather. The affair on which the worthy lawyer was engaged being a most important one, he had given strict orders not to be disturbed on any pretence whatever.

"Indeed—indeed, sir, but I must speak with him!" exclaimed a female voice, in reply to the reiterated assurances of the head clerk, that his principal was no longer in chambers.

"Call in the morning, I tell you!" replied the man, at the same time attempting to close the half-open door which he continued to hold in his hand.

"Impossible! I have no shelter for the night! For pity's sake, let me see your master, only for an instant!"

The plaintive tone in which the request was uttered attracted the attention of a youth about thirteen years of age, who for the last two hours had been sitting listlessly at his desk, drawing caricatures upon the title-page of a volume of "Blackstone's Commentaries," which was lying before him.

"Who is it, Griffiths?" he demanded, but without moving from his seat.

"Some mad woman, I believe!" answered the man, impatiently. "I can't get rid of her!"

"I am not mad!" exclaimed Martha—for

the suppliant was no other than the grand-daughter of the agent—"although I have endured enough to make me so! If Mr. Foster has indeed left here, tell me, for pity's sake, where I can find him?"

"Number fourteen, Portland street," said the head clerk, at the same time winking to his subordinates, who evidently thought it a good joke to send the poor creature in the pitiless rain upon a fruitless errand.

"Thank you, sir!" murmured the female, humbly.

Mr. Griffiths had nearly closed the door, when the youth who had just spoken jumped from his stool and caught the handle in his hand.

"Why, it is raining cats and dogs!" he exclaimed, in a tone of reproach, at the same time throwing the door wide open.

As the speaker was the only son of his employer, the head clerk did not dare to resent it: shrugging his shoulders, to intimate that he washed his hands of the affair, he slowly returned to his desk.

"Come in, my good woman!" continued the speaker; "I fear it is impossible that you can see my father to-night; but in the morning——"

"I shall be dead by that time!" sobbed Martha, as she stood at the entrance of the office, the rain dripping from her thin garments.

The sympathy of Clement Foster was excited: he knew that the orders given by his father were strict—but then they had not been issued personally to himself.

"If your business is really so important!" he said—then hesitated, fearing that he had gone too far.

"Mr. Foster is here!" exclaimed the woman, eagerly; "you are young, have a kind heart—falsehood is a stranger to your lips; you would not see me the sport of your companions! Tell your father that the grand-daughter of Peter Quin—he will remember the name—entreats to see him for a few minutes. I have only the thanks of a wretched, forlorn creature to offer you," she added, "for the service!"

"I'll earn them!" replied the youth, with a benevolent smile. "They shall be my first fee, and I trust the last!"

From which speech it was evident that the speaker had no great love for the profession which it was the wish of his father he should follow.

"I thought I left orders, Clement," said Mr. Foster, as the youth gently opened the door of his private room, "not to be disturbed!"

"I am certain you will pardon me, when *you* learn the reason!" replied his son; *"it is the first client whose* cause I have *undertaken!"*

The lawyer smiled, and the speaker at once proceeded to explain the motive for his intrusion: the visit of Martha, her wretched appearance, and earnest entreaty to see him but for a few minutes.

"The old story, I suppose!" exclaimed Mr. Foster, when he had concluded; "charity!"

"I do not think it is!" observed Clement; "though evidently very poor, she has neither the air nor manners of a mendicant! If you can spare a few minutes, I really wish that you would see her—for she has deeply interested me! Stay!" he added, recollecting himself; "she bade me say that she was the grand-daughter of Peter Quin!"

"Peter Quin!" repeated his father, with surprise.

"Yes; I am certain that was the name she mentioned."

"I will see her!" said the lawyer. "As she is your first client, Clem, it would be scarcely fair to refuse her! Show her in!"

The boy had not waited to hear the concluding order; but the instant his father said that he would see the object of his solicitude, opened the door of the office, and beckoned for her to approach.

When Mr. Foster raised his eyes and recognised, as he imagined, the servant of the agent and money-lender, the first impression was that she had imposed upon his son, by asserting herself to be the grand-daughter instead of the domestic of a man known to be so wealthy as Peter Quin.

"What is your name, my good woman?" he demanded, in a tone which was anything but encouraging to his visitor.

"Martha Quin, sir!"

"You persist in claiming him as your grandfather, then?"

"Would to heaven," exclaimed the poor woman fervently, "that any other blood than his ran in my veins! My childhood would not have been desolate—my youth blighted thus! Poverty has no shame—I could have borne it cheerfully; but the inheritance of an evil name is indeed a misfortune!"

The brows of the lawyer unbent: he began to think that he had judged too hastily.

"I took you for his servant!" he observed, in a milder tone.

"I was his servant!" interrupted Martha; "but I have broken my chain! I was his drudge—his slave; but that is past: these rags, my wretched appearance, prove how he repaid me! Not content with degrading me," she added, "for years, he has robbed me of a large inheritance; and this night, had I not fled, would have added murder to the long list of his crimes!"

"These are fearful charges!" said Mr.

Foster gravely; "and, if false, you must be one of the most wicked as well as artful of your sex!"

"And if true?"

"The most outraged and oppressed!"

Martha drew from her bosom the will and letter, and placed them, without one word of comment, in the hands of the speaker—who after motioning to her to take a seat, began to peruse them. As he proceeded, the doubts he had entertained vanished. Still one thing puzzled him: he could not comprehend what advantage Peter Quin had gained beyond the gratification of his hate by suppressing them. He was far from suspecting the forgeries he had committed.

"Have you ever signed any papers," he demanded, "since you became of age?"

"Never."

"Ever been to the Bank, or other public establishment, with your grandfather, and written your name in any book?"

"I never left the house with him, unless when a child, in my life!" replied his visitor.

"What induced you to consult me?" said Mr. Foster.

"Despair!" exclaimed the agent's granddaughter. "The first time I saw you, you spoke to me with kindness; and I thought you might take an interest in a poor, friendless creature, who had no other hope!"

"Have you told me all?" inquired the gentleman.

Martha hesitated, and looked first at the door and then at Clement Foster, who, during the conversation, had remained in the office.

"Leave us, Clem," said his father, "and tell Griffiths not to leave till I have spoken with him!"

As soon as they were alone, his client explained to him how she been driven to the step she had taken by the cruelty and and treachery of Peter Quin in depriving her of her adopted child.

At the words "adopted child," the lawyer smiled. Martha perfectly understood the doubt which his smile conveyed, but forbore to explain how the infant had been brought to the house by the ruffian whom her grandfather had employed to steal it. Her desire was to obtain possession of her darling—to have her near her—to prove a mother to her; not to afford the least clue which might lead to her restoration to her real parents.

A long and interesting conversation took place between them, at the termination of which Mr. Foster undertook to conduct her cause against the agent.

"He shall disgorge the wealth," he said, "*of which he has deprived you*; especially if, as I begin to suspect, he has obtained it by means which place his life in your power!"

"I care not for the money!" said Martha; "it is my child I want! To know that she is safe—to hear her voice—to feel her little arms clasped once more around my neck—for she loves me," she added, "dearly—dearly!"

"And I doubt not that you have merited her affection!" replied the lawyer, with a benevolent smile. "You cannot return, after what has passed, to the house of the agent!"

"Never!" said his client, firmly.

"Where do you intend to pass the night? Have you no friends?"

"Neither friends nor money!"

"In that case, I must act for you!" observed Mr. Foster, ringing the bell.

It was answered by his son.

"Send one of the clerks," continued the speaker, "for a hackney coach, and accompany this young lady—who will remain my guest for some days—to Portland Street! Direct the housekeeper to prepare her room as quickly as possible, and give strict orders that no one is admitted to see her till my return!"

Never in his life had the youth been so surprised. Had he received such directions from any lips but his father's, he would have hesitated to execute them.

"Bless you!" exclaimed Martha, gratefully. "Had all our fellow-creatures hearts like yours, the world would be much better!"

"The world is a very good world!" answered the lawyer; "it has its dark and sunny side; unfortunately, your path in life has hitherto been in the former! You persist in your resolution?" he added, lowering his tone.

"To the last extremity!" exclaimed his client, impatiently. "If Fanny is not restored to me by the hour I name, the register of his misdeeds shall be placed in the hands of justice!"

There was a smile and a half-suppressed titter in the outer office.

Clement Foster led the strange client—as the clerks afterwards designated the agent's grand-daughter—to the coach which had been sent for; and one or two of the juniors began to indulge in all sorts of impertinent speculations as to the fee she had paid, till Griffiths began to get impatient.

"When have you seem as much of the profession as I have," he said, "you will kow that clients in fine clothes are not those who pay the best! She is the grand-daughter of Peter Quin!"

"And who is Peter Quin?" demanded the clerks, with a sneer.

"Who he is no one can tell!" replied the old

man; "but one thing is certain, he is worth a million, at the very least!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The waters shine like a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing on the earth!
And now again 'tis black—and now the glee
Of the land-hills shakes with the mountain mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er the young earthquake's birth. BYRON.

THE night on which Martha Quin fled from her home was, as we stated in the preceding chapter, a most rude and boisterous one. The rain fell with that deep, steady, sullen splash which gave little hope of its cessation. The streets were deserted by all but those wretched, homeless wanderers whom misery or vice had left no refuge to fly to. Here and there, by the dim light of the lamps, an unfortunate wanderer might have been discovered, shivering under the shelter of some friendly archway or passage, secure from the pitiless shower, but exposed to the keen blasts of November's icy breath—which like a merciless creditor pursued its debtors—who vainly fled before it, or sat crouching in their rags.

Poor humanity—how bitterly its vices and errors sometimes are atoned!

The last stroke of eleven had just struck from the church of St. Paul's, with a lazy, booming sound, as sad as if the clapper had been muffled in a pall, when a man, clad in an old velveteen shooting jacket, his hat drawn closely over his brows, turned the corner of Charing Cross, and directed his steps down the Strand. So rapid were his strides, that the child which he dragged rather than led by the hand could scarcely keep pace with him.

The infant was plainly but neatly clad; a profusion of light auburn hair escaped from the faded handkerchief which had been tied over her innocent head—a poor protection against such a storm; her neck and arms were bare, and she shivered either from cold or terror.

"Take me back!" she sobbed; "pray take me back! Indeed I can walk no further!"

"Another word, and I'll twist your neck!" exclaimed the ruffian, with a curse; "it's quite bad enough to be exposed to such weather as this, without being annoyed by your whining!"

The little sufferer obeyed him—not another word escaped her lips; half-suppressed *sobs alone indicated her terror* and distress.

"*The arches are close at hand!*" observed the man, "we shall soon be able to get under cover!"

This brief conversation—if conversation it may be called—took place just as the speakers passed the narrow lane leading to Hungerford Market—a very different building from the Hungerford Market of the present day. Something in the tone of the speakers, more than the words themselves, attracted the attention of a man who had taken shelter under one of the porches of the old-fashioned corner shop; he thrust his head out to observe them, at the same time muttering, half aloud:

"She is very pretty—make an excellent sylph! What can the fellow be going to do with her?"

By this time Miles and Fanny had turned down the arches running under the Adelphi towards the Thames. The man hesitated no longer; but giving his coat an additional button, and turning up the cuffs of his sleeves, he dashed after them with a celerity which evinced that, whatever his intentions, he was serious in them.

Peter Quin's instructions to the ready instrument of his hatred to the innocent child were, to dispose of the brat in such a way that neither he or any one else would ever be plagued with it again. With his usual cunning, he had entered into no details—it it was not necessary: he knew his man—a hint was sufficient.

As they approached the gloomy arch—which like a grave yawned to receive them—the child hesitated and drew back.

"What ails you?" demanded the ruffian; "you complained of the rain just now!

"I don't mind the rain!" sobbed Fanny. "I'll not cry any more! I'll be good—indeed I will—but pray don't take me there!"

Despite her struggles, Miles—to whom the locality was well known—succeeded in dragging her down the winding labyrinth of arches, till they reached the termination looking upon the Thames. The tide was just turning, and the waters roared angrily as they rushed with fearful rapidity on their way to Old London Bridge. Not a star was to be seen, but the flashes of lightning which occasionally rent the sable veil of night lit for an instant the horrors of the scene—and all was dark again. The man seated himself upon a stone at the entrance of the archway, and drew his intended victim towards him. Her little arms and hands were cold as those of a corpse.

"Let me say my prayers!" murmured Fanny.

"Prayers!" repeated Miles, with a sneer; "to be sure you shall, my dear—I like children to say their prayers! There—place your hands in mine—that will do!"

With his left hand he grasped those of

the infant, whilst with his right he removed the handkerchief from her head, and began to bind her arms. He was a man of precaution, and did everything he undertook in a methodical manner; assistance on such a night he considered quite out of the question—still she might struggle, or be washed on shore by the current.

"Have you finished?" he said.

"Don't kill me—pray don't kill me?" sobbed the infant.

"Kill you! What nonsense! Why should I kill you?" said the fellow, in a mocking tone, at the same time lifting her in his arms, with the intention of precipitating her into the river.

"The very thing I should like to know!" exclaimed a voice near him; "in fact, I was about to put the same question myself!"

Miles started, and replaced Fanny upon the ground; at the same instant a broad flash of lightning revealed to him the presence of the speaker, who was standing within a few feet of the river. It was the same man who had watched him from the porch of the shop at the corner of the lane leading to the market: he had taken a different turn in the vaults from the one Miles had pursued—and thus came upon him unawares.

The child saw and heard him, too. No sooner did her little feet touch the ground, than she ran to him, exclaiming, in an agony of terror:

"Take me home—oh, take me home!"

"Where is your home?" demanded the stranger, kindly.

"She has no home!" observed Miles, in a sullen tone; "we are both strangers in London!"

"Yet you seem well acquainted with this place!"

The detected ruffian muttered something about his having once before taken shelter there.

"And what were you about to do with this infant?"

"To do with her! why, nothing!"

"Her arms are bound!" added the stranger, feeling them.

"Why, yes—that was to prevent her running away!"

"Swimming away, you mean!" said the querist; "with you I have nothing to do!"

"The better for yourself, perhaps!" observed Miles.

"But the child I most certainly shall not leave with you!"

"You won't?"

"No!"

"We shall see!" exclaimed the baffled murderer, at the same time springing towards the spot whence the voice proceeded—for the place was now so dark that he had no other clue to guide him.

He had a knife in his hand, and struck at random in every direction. It was in vain that he cursed and swore: the low, sullen echoes of the vaults alone replied to him. He paused, and placed his ear to the ground, to listen if he could detect the sound of retreating footsteps—but in vain.

A cold shudder seized him: he began to suspect whether the being who had so providentially stepped in between him and his victim was a creature of this world—human like himself.

"If you are a man, speak!" roared Miles.

There was a dead silence.

"If a devil, answer me!" added the speaker.

"What would you!" demanded a voice, which sounded as if it came from the crown of the arch above—an illusion common in most vaulted passages of any considerable length.

"What are you going to do with the child?"

"You will never see it again!"

"Who are you?"

"You named me when you called upon me! Besides, you have served me long enough to know me! Some call me Beelzebub—others Astorath! I have almost as many names as you have crimes!"

"Bah!" exclaimed the ruffian, whose superstitious fears had gradually vanished; "I am not such a fool as to believe that! Although you have so many names, you are not clever enough to tell mine!"

"*It has been written, Miles*, in my book for years, and the account scored against it is a long one! We shall soon meet again!"

The loud, unearthly laugh which rang through the vaults alarmed the wretch even more than the knowledge of his name, which the fiend, real or pretended, had pronounced—terror struck him speechless. Suddenly he recollected that he had the means of procuring a light in his pocket: to draw forth a phosphorous bottle and ignite the sheet of an old newspaper was the work of an instant.

Several times he ran wildly to and fro, flashing the blazing mass of flame above his head—not a creature was to be seen.

Suddenly it burnt out, and the place became darker than before.

If, instead of directing his eyes to the vault from whence he imagined the voice to have proceeded, Miles had directed his researches to the mud which previous tides had left upon the ground, he might have detected the impression of feet from which the shoes had been removed, and so comprehended why he had been unable to de-

tect the sound of the stranger's receding steps.

The courage of which Miles boasted was merely that brute courage which certain animals possess even in a greater degree than man. His superstitious fears aroused, it failed him, and he stood trembling like a child—the darkness appalled him. In the hoarse sound of the roaring waters which rolled rapidly past the entrance to the archway, he fancied that he heard voices accusing him of murder. Like a guilty wretch, he fled the spot, and only began to draw his breath freely when he once more emerged into the Strand. The dim lamps, the rain, which continued to fall in torrents, were a relief to him—he felt that he was once more in the world.

On his way home he reflected that it would never do to inform Peter Quin of the extraordinary manner in which his intentions had been defeated. In the first place, the old man would not believe him; in the next, he should lose the promised reward of his crime. He determined, therefore, to let him think that his desires had been accomplished—that the innocent object of his hatred had rejoined her kindred cherubs in a better world.

One circumstance at times shook his belief in the supernatural character of the being who had interfered in so singular a manner between him and his victim. He could not comprehend why the fiend should prevent the completion of a crime which must have placed, according to all human calculation, both himself and his employer still further in his power. Eventually he came to the conclusion that perhaps, after all, the devil was not so black as he is generally represented.

In the present instance, we have no doubt that our readers will agree that Miles, for once in his life, was right.

In a large, dimly-lighted room in Drury Lane, was seated a female in deep mourning, apparently thirty years of age, but in reality much younger. Her features, which still retained traces of considerable beauty, were worn by sorrow and excitement. Perhaps want, too, had contributed its share to the ravages which had deprived her complexion of its brilliancy—her form of its graceful outline. The woman was busily engaged in sewing spangles and tinsel ornaments upon a light gauze dress, such as dancers and actresses wear in the exercise of their precarious profession. At every pause in the rain she raised her large black eyes from her work, and listened attentively, as if expecting some one—paused and then resumed her employment.

A harlequin's costume, masks, a Spanish hat and feather, with various indescribable articles, technically known to actors by the name of properties, were either scattered about the room or hung upon the pegs behind the door, directly opposite to which was a bed, and by the side of the bed a child's cot: it was empty.

"What a night!" muttered the dancer. "I wish Harry would return! The place appears doubly lonely without him, and——"

A half-suppressed sob prevented the completion of the sentence. The poor creature thought of the child—her only one—whom she had lately lost, and a solitary tear fell upon one of the spangles she was sewing upon her dress.

Spangles and tears. Such is too often an emblem of the fate of those who take the stage as a profession: bread to-day—starvation to-morrow; forced to dress the face in smiles whilst the heart is ashes and the pocket empty. Not that such was absolutely the case with Signor Du Bast or his wife—they had reached a certain standing. During the season both were engaged at the Italian Opera; at Christmas they figured in the pantomimes, and gained something by teaching: so that they looked upon themselves as fortunate in comparison with many in their vocation.

The husband had left home at an early hour in the evening to arrange with the manager of one of the minor theatres for the forthcoming pantomime, and to settle the terms of their engagement. As the hour advanced, the wife became more and more uneasy, and every five minutes raised her eyes from the tinsel finery to the little, old-fashioned clock, ticking monotonously over the mantel-piece.

Suddenly the ticking ceased—a sort of grumbling noise ensued, followed by a dull stroke upon the bell of the time-piece: which feat accomplished, it went on tick-tacking as drowsily and sedately as before.

It was one o'clock.

The female rose from her seat, carefully gathered up her work, and put it away: she was evidently uneasy at the lateness of the hour.

"Something must have occurred!" she said. "I will seek him! And yet, should he return and find me absent! No—no! patience—patience!"

There was a fresh gust of wind, which caused the sashes of the windows to rattle, and the rain dashed against them like an angry bailiff roaring for admittance. The fury of the blast at last exhausted itself and died away, moaning, as with a human voice, round the gables and chimneys of the house.

"Heaven help those," thought the dancer, "who on such a night have neither food

nor shelter! We at least have both—and if Harry would only return!"

There was a footfall upon the stairs: the affectionate wife knew it instantly, and threw open the door, to admit her husband.

"Where have you been?" she anxiously demanded. And oh, Harry—Harry!" she added, bursting into tears, "whom have you there?"

The question was caused by the appearance of a child about the age of the one she had so lately lost, which the drenched harlequin held closely pressed to his bosom. A hundred times had he brought his own tired infant, at an hour equally late, from the theatre, asleep in his arms. No wonder that the sight of the little stranger revived her sorrows.

"I can scarcely tell you, Carry," replied the man, placing his burthen upon the ground. "The manner in which I came by her was singular enough!"

"Why, her arms are bound!" exclaimed his wife, drawing the child towards her, and loosening the handkerchief.

"I had no time to untie them!"

"And she is wet through—wet to the skin!" she added. "You shall tell me your adventure, Harry, by-and-bye: it would be a sin and shame to suffer the poor little creature—who reminds me of our own lost darling—to remain in this state!"

"Or me either!" replied her husband, with a smile—for he felt delighted with the interest which his wife appeared to take in the little stranger: "and suppose you warm up the broth we left at dinner! I dare say she can eat some—and I am sure I can! Don't be alarmed at my fit of extravagance!" he added; "made an excellent engagement—two pounds fifteen per week, and six weeks certain!"

He forgot there was a quarter's rent to pay—and the mind of his wife was too much occupied with sad thoughts to remind him.

Whilst Signor Du Bast was changing his clothes behind the curtains of the bed, the woman had stripped the cold and shivering infant before the fire, and dressed her in a frock and trousers which had been worn by her own lost child. No sooner did she behold her in them than the feelings of the desolate mother gave way; she pressed her convulsively to her breast and sobbed passionately.

The child, wondering at her tears, endeavored to console her.

"Don't cry!" she said; "I cannot bear to see you cry! Indeed I will be very good! Mamma sometimes cries, but not so often as she used to do!"

"And who is your mamma, my love?" demanded the woman.

Fanny could only tell her that she was her mamma, and that they lived in a house near a church—for she often used to hear the bells; but could neither tell the name of the street nor that of her parent.

On hearing his wife's sighs, the dancer hastily completed his toilette. Poor fellow! he had no great choice of wardrobe—the only suit he possessed was the one drenched by the rain: he had been compelled, therefore, to borrow from his theatrical properties.

Over a pair of tights, to which here and there a solitary spangle still adhered, he had drawn a pair of russet boots made in the fashion of Charles I., and replaced his frock-coat by a faded crimson velvet jacket, which had figured in many a ballet at the Opera. He was a tall, but slight man, exceedingly well made, and possessed of a handsome, good-humored countenance, in which the prevailing expression was great good nature; the lines which indicated deep feeling were absent; cast as his lot was in the world, it was fortunate for himself that it was so.

"Come, Carry!" he said, in an affectionate tone, at the same time drawing her to him; "you must not give way to these feelings, for my sake! Had you married a rich man, as your friends wished you, instead of a poor dancer, you could not have saved her!"

"I know that, Harry!" replied his wife; "it is weak—foolish! But in that frock she looked so like—that I could not ——"

Here a fresh burst of tears interrupted her speech.

"You are cold!" she added, after a pause, during which she had successively struggled to recover her composure.

"Oh, never mind me!" observed the good-natured fellow; "think only of yourself!"

Without heeding his advice, Carry—as he called her—set to arranging the table. The remains of their dinner, which had been carefully put by for the next day, were brought out—the broth placed upon the fire to warm. In a few minutes, it sent forth a savory steam from the humble board.

"Eat, pet!" said the man, placing a cupful before Fanny—who, without waiting for a second invitation, began to feed heartily.

By this time the heat of the fire had dried her hair, which had hung in long, damp masses when he first brought her into the room. It now fell in thick ringlets over her neck and shoulders. Her cheeks, lately so pale with cold and terror, were flushed with the return of health. As the signor gazed upon her with an eye of admiration, he observed, in a tone of professional admiration:

"What a lovely fairy she would make!"

"Not more so than our dear child!" said his wife, reproachfully.

"Certainly not, my love!" hastily answered the dancer, who knew how susceptibly jealous is the mother's heart; "but since we have lost our own sweet girl, let us be grateful to heaven for the consolation it has sent! Put her to bed," he added, in a whisper! "she seems tired and sleepy! Poor thing! when I recollect the horrors she has gone through, I don't wonder at it!"

"Horrors?" repeated the female.

Her husband shrugged his shoulders and emphatically declared that a month's rehearsal of a pantomine would be nothing to them. He even carried his pity so far as to hint that they would make an excellent subject for a serious ballet.

The curiosity of Signora Du Bast—for such was her professional name—was aroused; and yet she could not resist returning to imprint a second kiss upon the brow of the sleeping Fanny, who occupied the no longer deserted cot at the side of the bed: the signor observed the action with a smile. With his practical philosophy, he well knew that it was much better to occupy the heart than permit it to collapse for want of a tenant.

As soon as his wife resumed her seat by the fire-place, he proceeded to relate to her his adventure, and the means by which he had rescued Fanny from the tender mercy of Miles.

"The monster!" exclaimed the woman, indignantly; "how did you learn his name?"

"From the child. I asked her under the arches!" replied the dancer; "and it enabled me to frighten the rascal out of his wits; but she knows nothing more!"

"Most likely she will be reclaimed!" observed the female, with a sigh.

"I do not think so!" answered her husband; "in my opinion, she is the child of poor people, who have already too many mouths to provide for! You saw with what eagerness she partook of our humble meal. Her clothes, though neat and clean, are of the very coarsest materials! No—no!" he added; "I have no fear that any one will claim her!"

"If they should," said his wife, "we must give her up!"

"Certainly!"

"I could never," added the female, "have it on my conscience to keep an infant from its mother! I have not forgotten the pangs I felt when heaven deprived me of my own! But I would rather a hundred times it were dead, than left in ignorance of its fate!"

The signor thought so, too; and it was *finally settled between* them, that if by any *accident the little stranger* should remain unclaimed, they should adopt her as their own. But under any circumstances they resolved not to give it up, till well assured that it would be kindly treated, and the mystery of the horrible attempt upon its life had been fully explained.

The worthy couple need not have distressed themselves by these resolutions and anticipations. Many years were doomed to elapse before they heard any inquiries after the lost child.

As a matter of precaution, the dancer, at the request of his wife, wrote a full account of the manner in which he had rescued her—the reason to suppose that the name of the ruffian who would have murdered her was Miles.

This document, together with the clothes she wore and the handkerchief which bound her hands, were carefully placed at the bottom of an old trunk, chiefly filled with theatrical costumes and properties.

CHAPTER XIX.

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us. SHAKESPEARE.

PETER QUIN arose the following morning from his broken slumbers: never had daylight been more welcome to him. For the first time for years his self-confidence was shaken: he felt as if a net were gradually closing around him, from whose meshes it was scarcely possible he could escape. His chief hope lay in the friendless position of his grand-daughter—the improbability of her finding friends either to assist or counsel her—and the chance that, driven by despair, exposed to the inclemency of the night, she had been rash enough to seek an asylum in suicide.

With this charitable hope, he committed the extravagance of purchasing one of the daily papers, and hastily hunted over the columns which contained the list of accidents and offences.

"No—no!" he muttered, shaking his head with an expression of disappointment; "the fool has not had the courage to drown herself—no such good luck!"

Little did he imagine that Martha, for the first time in her life, at the very moment he made this unnatural observation, was seated at the well-appointed table of Mr. Foster, talking over with him the steps to be pursued in order to establish her claim to the fortune of which he had so long deprived her.

Peter's first visitor was his confederate,

Miles. The fellow had fully made up his mind to the tale he was to tell, and resolved that nothing should shake him.

"Well!" demanded the old man, in a sharp, angry tone, "what are you come for?"

"You know!" replied the ruffian, with a lear; "I have executed your orders!"

"Orders! I gave you none!"

"*Wishes*, then!" continued his visitor. "I know you never speak out plainly what you desire! You only let drop just sufficient not to compromise yourself! I wonder," he added, "you should be so suspicious—and with an old friend, too! It doesn't look well, Mr. Quin, and hurts one's feelings!"

"Feelings!" repeated the agent, in a tone of mingled contempt and impatience; "it is the first time I ever heard that reptiles had any!"

"Why, what are you so angry about?" exclaimed the man, with a look of surprise. "Ain't I done as you desired? The brat," he added, lowering his voice, "is disposed of!"

"Respectably?" said his employer.

"Of course!"

"The ruffian accompanied the words with a leer which at any other time would have won a laugh from Peter Quin. To his surprise, the old man answered him with more than usual seriousness.

"I have changed my mind," he said, "respecting her! Martha has made such a fuss about the child, that—in short, I wish you to bring her back again!"

"From where?"

"From the party you have intrusted her to!"

Miles reflected for an instant before he answered him: he at last came to the conclusion that it was merely a *ruse* to test his fidelity in the execution of his orders, or an excuse to avoid payment of the reward he had promised him.

"Come, guv'nor," he said, "no larking!"

"I am not in a fit humor for larking, as you call it!" growled Peter, at the same time casting on him a look of fury. "I tell you I have changed my mind—that I want the child back here! Now do you understand me?"

"I don't know as I do!" answered the man; "first you say one thing, then another! Yesterday I was to place her where she would never be heard on again! To-day I am to bring her back to you! Can't make you out!"

"Where is she?"

"A good deal beyond London Bridge by this time, I should say!" replied the ruffian, with a grin, "at the rate the tide was a *runnin'!*"

Despite his desire to re-possess himself of Fanny, as a peace-offering between himself and grand-daughter, the agent could not repress a smile of satisfaction at hearing the fate of the object of his hatred.

"Why, you don't mean to say that you threw the child into the Thames?" he exclaimed.

I? Of course not!" replied Miles, who had observed the momentary smile and expression of the old man's features—from which he concluded that all was right again; "likely I should *say sich* a thing—and to you, too! She travelled that way by boat—that's all!"

The speaker began laughing at his own wit; but the laugh gradually subsided into a growl, as the features of the agent relapsed once more into their stern expression. He began to fear that something really had gone wrong.

"I am glad," said Peter Quin, "that you have not been so precipitate as I feared! The brat must be found again!"

Miles shook his head, as much as to say that it was impossible.

"I tell you she must!" repeated the old man, with a burst of passion. "I seldom jest—and at this time you will find me terribly in earnest! Answer me!" he continued, seizing the fellow by the wrist; "and truly, as you value your soul—pshaw! your neck, I mean! Is the brat dead?"

"No!" replied the ruffian; "she is not! I know this is only a trick to try me—but I don't care! You shall hear the truth, since you wish it!"

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the grandfather of Martha, with a sigh, which proved how greatly the intelligence had relieved him; "it has been more merciful to me than I have been to myself! Now, then, proceed," he added; "explain yourself, and remember the first lie I detect you in, prepares the rope for your neck!"

Miles proceeded at once to give him a circumstantial account of everything that had occurred. How, on his departure the preceding day, he had secured the child—kept her concealed in the cellar of his own house till night—when he had taken her to the arches under the Adelphi, with the intention, as he candidly confessed, of ridding himself of his charge. He next described the manner in which she had been rescued.

When he had concluded, the two men continued to regard each other for several minutes in silence. Peter Quin had listened to many strange confidences in his time—but this appeared the strangest of all. His first impression was to treat it as a clumsy attempt to impose upon his credulity

and superstition: but the deep earnestness with which the man narrated his adventure, strange and improbable as it appeared, staggered him.

"And do you expect me to believe this tissue of improbabilities?" he demanded.

"No!" replied Miles, striking his clenched fist, with an air of vexation, upon the table; and I was a fool for telling you—but it is true, for all that!"

"You must find her!" said the old man, sternly.

"How?"

"That is your affair—not mine!" was the answer to his very natural question. "Mark me!" continued the speaker; more than I can explain depends upon my having the brat once more in my power; it may be that the very next day I may repeat my first directions to dispose of her—but of that hereafter! You have managed the affair most clumsily, and must take the consequences!"

"It's a hard skein you have given me to unravel, master!" observed Miles, in a sullen tone; "but I must do my best! How long will you give me?"

"Till ten to-night!"

"Make it twelve!" said the man; "such a track as I must follow is not to be traced by daylight! Only two hours more!"

"Till twelve be it, then!" answered Peter, "but don't think to escape if you deceive me! Where you to fly to the ends of the earth, I should find the means to reach you! The law, Miles," he added, in a significant tone, "has a long arm!

"I know that!" muttered his tool, spitefully; "but it may reach more than me at last!"

"Do you threaten, rascal?"

"No—I only advise!" answered the fellow, in a more humble tone; "you know that you are not dealing fairly with me! I have risked my neck for you a dozen times, at least, and been poorly paid, into the bargain! It's not my fault that you have changed your mind respecting the brat—would I had never seen her!"

His employer mentally repeated the wish. It was agreed that, if successful, the man should give a signal, by tapping three times on the outside of the parlor shutter—on hearing which, the agent was to open the door, and admit him.

His last words to him were, "Bring her back, and the reward I promised you shall be doubled!"

Miles gave a sinister smile as he left the house and retired to the adjoining domicile. His first question on entering, was for the man known amongst the frequenters of the *place as the* captain; and he appeared *particularly disappointed when told* that he had not yet arrived. It was past mid-day when he came. On his arrival, the two worthies had a long and private conversation together.

"I can't attend to business to-day!" observed the agent to Mr. Foster, to whom he had half opened the door of his den; "I am ill—occupied!"

"You will make me an exception!" was the reply.

"I make no exceptions!" continued the old man, testily; "I have already advanced upon the estate of your client more money than it is worth! But if he likes to sell, I don't mind another five thousand, or even six!"

"By which generous offer you would gain at least fifty thousand pounds!" observed the lawyer; "really money lending must be a very profitable business! I think I must take to it! But, large as your profits are, I think I can offer you more!"

The temptation of a considerable gain was too much for the avaricious nature of Peter Quin to withstand; he at once opened the door, and invited the speaker to follow him into his office.

"Are we alone?" inquired Mr. Foster, as soon as they were seated.

"Quite! Why do you ask?"

"Simply because what I have to say must be heard at present by no ears but yours! You had better fasten the outer door!"

"It is fastened!" exclaimed the agent, wondering at a precaution which from any person less respectable would have excited his suspicions—knowing that he was alone in the house; "so we may as well proceed at once to business, although my poor head is scarcely clear enough—for I have passed a miserable night!"

"That I can readily believe!" observed his visitor.

The agent began to feel puzzled: he could not understand why the speaker should be so ready to believe that he had passed a miserable night.

"You are very odd in your replies!" he said; "or else my brain is not as clear as usual! But come—let us proceed—first tell me the name of your client?"

He drew his memorandum book before him, and prepared, as was his custom, to note down the name and proposition which he expected to be submitted to him.

"*Martha Quin!*"

The pen dropped from the hand of her grandfather as suddenly as if he had been struck with the palsy.

"The grand-daughter," resumed the lawyer, "whom for years you have deprived of fortune—whom you have reared in ignorance—treated as your drudge—your servant—taunted daily with eating the bread

of charity—with being the object of your bounty!"

"Where is she?" demanded the agent, partially recovering from his surprise,—"Where is the wretch?"

"Where you cannot reach her!" replied Mr. Foster; "even if you were mad enough to make the attempt! You see I know whom I am dealing with! Where there is neither honor nor feeling, delicacy is superfluous! Listen to the conditions on which your life may yet be spared!"

"My life!" repeated Peter Quin, in a tone of affected indignation; "you go too far, sir!"

"I fear I have," said the lawyer, sternly, "in lending myself, even indirectly, to the compromise of a felony, which the law punishes with death! I have seen," he continued, "the power of attorney by which you have regularly drawn the interest of the large sum in the funds and other securities!"

The old man hung his head and groaned: not from shame or remorse—but disappointed rage and avarice. The vulture forced to disgorge its prey—the wolf to give freedom to the lamb, were the fittest types of his feelings at that moment.

"Well!" he muttered; "the conditions? Conditions from her!"

"The immediate repayment of the sums you have drawn in her name—which can be easily done by transferring the mortgages you hold on the estate you just alluded to: they will about cover them!"

"Continue!" screamed the agent.

"That you retire at once from London, and the not over-respectable transactions in which you are engaged!"

"Is that the last?"

"No!" replied Mr. Foster; "the last and most important is yet to come! The child which your grand-daughter adopted, and loves as her own, must be restored—that failing, all other conditions are useless!"

"She would hang me, I suppose?"

"With as little remorse as I would!" was the cool reply.

"Monster—unnatural monster!" exclaimed Peter Quin; "no respect for grey hairs or the ties of blood!"

"Have you respected them?" demanded the lawyer, sternly. "As we sow, so we reap! No man ever yet violated the moral or natural law, that in time it did not fearfully avenge itself. Of the tie between my client and the child I allude to I am ignorant. She has assured me that it is not hers—and I believe her!"

The wretched old man gave a cynical smile: it would be some consolation, he thought, if he *could* blast the reputation of his grand-daughter in the opinion of her legal adviser and only friend.

"Did she carry her hypocrisy so far as to tell you that?" he said.

"And more!" continued Mr. Foster; "perhaps she saw by my countenance that I was not convinced—for she added, that she possessed certain memoranda in your handwriting, which would prove at any time, if necessary, how the infant first came under her care!"

"Has she shown them?" eagerly demanded her grandfather.

"Not yet!"

His visitor was an acute observer, and he noticed that the fallen man breathed more freely on hearing that he had not seen them: all of which tended to confirm him in the opinion he entertained of the truthfulness of Martha's statements.

"What answer am I to take back?" he asked.

"That I will reflect upon it, and to-morrow——"

"Your reflections must be made in Newgate, then!" replied the man of law; "for the instant I leave this house an affidavit will be made. I need not remind you that a warrant once issued, your fate will be beyond the control either of your grand-daughter or myself!"

Peter Quin felt that he was completely in the toils. He had rapidly revolved every circumstance over in his mind, but discovered no loop-hole to escape. Bitterly did he curse his fatuity in not having removed Martha from his path.

"I yield," he said, "to all that she demands; the money shall be paid!"

"And the child?"

"Restored to her to-morrow!"

"That will not do!" observed Mr. Foster; "it is the only point upon which my instructions are precise! I cannot return without her!"

"Can I annihilate time and space!" demanded the agent, frantically—for his adversary was pushing him to his last intrenchments. "I have sent the child away and cannot whistle her back again!"

"Sent her away?" repeated his visitor, fixing his eyes upon him sternly.

"Do you suppose I have murdered her?"

The lawyer looked as though he thought him capable of such a crime.

Peter Quin broke into a sneering laugh.

"How little do you know the world!" he exclaimed; "men of calculation never commit unnecessary crimes! The brat's life is as precious to me as to the unnatural wretch who calls herself my grandchild! And shall I tell you why? It is gold to me—gold!" he repeated, "for which I have lived and toiled!"

"And sinned!" observed Mr. Foster, calmly.

"Ay, and sinned!" continued the old man. "Judge, therefore, if I should kill the bird that brought me such golden eggs! I removed her for two reasons: first, that it answered my purpose to do so; secondly, to punish Martha for her disobedience! The tables are turned, it seems—I am in her power—she has escaped from mine! By the time I name, her idol shall be restored to her!"

His visitor reflected that he should gain nothing by refusing the delay: it was one of those cases in which it was as dangerous to recede as to advance—for the delinquent once delivered into the hands of justice, it would no longer be in his power to make terms with him: from a feeling of revenge, the aged ruffian might conceal to the last the place of her retreat. His agents would be silent for their own sakes—and so all clue to the recovery of the infant escape him; added to which, he naturally argued that Peter Quin was not the man to commit a crime merely for the pleasure of the deed.

"I consent," he said, after a pause, "but remember," he continued, seeing that the eyes of the agent twinkled with joy, "that not a moment's delay beyond the hour you name will be accorded!"

"It will be sufficient," was the dry response.

"Attempt not to escape—for other eyes than mine will be upon you!"

"Doubtless!"

"The first movement to excite suspicion of your intention to do so, and you are lost!" said the messenger of his grand-daughter, rising to take his departure; "I am one of those who never threaten twice!"

"I hear you!" exclaimed Peter Quin, impatiently; "you need not fear my keeping faith with you—a man with the gallows staring him in the face does not play with the opportunity of escape! I must have some pledge," he added, "that, the child restored, Martha will not abuse the hold she has upon me!"

"You have my word for that," replied the lawyer, well knowing that his client, in the strength of her affection for her adopted child, would consent to any arrangement to insure her being restored to her once more.

The old man shrugged his shoulders doubtfully. He had little faith in moral pledges—he had violated too many during his career of crime. Had he been in a position to make terms instead of receiving them, he would have exacted more solid securities.

"*I need not tell you,*" observed Mr. Foster, as he quitted the office, "that this affair must be terminated at once—it admits neither of shuffling nor delay! At present I have only the moral proof of your guilt—the material ones will soon be in my possession—and then——"

"And then?" repeated Peter Quin, fixing his eyes anxiously upon him.

"I shall be compelled to do what all your life you seem to have neglected—my duty!"

With these words he left the agent to the torments of his own reflections—conscience he had none.

No sooner was he alone, than the wretched man gave way to the passion and despair it had cost him so great an effort to repress in the presence of his visitor. Barred in his den—secure alike from observation and intrusion, he cast himself upon the ground, tore his white hair in impotent fury, muttering the bitterest curses.

"My gold! my hard-earned gold!" he shrieked; "she would deprive me of it! Would that I could pour it molten down her throat! Oh, for the strength of other years—for a few days—a few more hours' delay! I'd find some means to baffle this accursed lawyer, and the idiot who has set him on to plague me! Idiot!" he repeated, through his clenched teeth; "it is I who have been the idiot, to keep a venomous serpent at my hearth, deeming it a harmless worm! Rightly served—rightly served! She should have followed her——"

The word died unspoken upon his lips—even in the solitude of his office he feared to utter it. Peter Quin had no conscience—but, like most men who have stained their souls with crime, he had many terrors.

One hope remained—true, it was but a slender one; and it was just possible that his agent, Miles, had spoken the truth respecting the infant—that Providence by some unlooked-for interposition had snatched it from the death he had intended: if so, it would not be impossible to recover her. As for the rest, the arrangement might be made easily enough. The old man was sufficiently rich to pay back—principal and interest—the fortune of his grand-daughter, who could then legally transfer to him the stock both in the Bank and India House standing in her name.

He groaned with anguish as he mentally calculated the sum.

"Not a penny more!" he exclaimed; "never shall she inherit a shilling of my money! Since I cannot take it with me when I die, I'll bequeath it to found a hospital for fools—or to the poor," he added, bitterly; "the poor, whom through life I have so loathed and hated!"

Then came the appalling doubt whether the ruffian he had employed had not deceiv-

ed him—whether, to gain time for escape, he had not lulled him with a promise it was no longer in his power to fulfill.

"If he has," thought Peter Quin, "let him look to it! I will show him the same mercy Martha extends to me—we will swing together!"

The hardened villain felt a secret consolation in the idea that, if compelled to render an account of his crimes at the bar of human justice, he should not suffer alone; and yet the man he contemplated dragging to destruction with him had served him a hundred times with fidelity.

Wisely has it been observed, that there is no friendship in crime.

CHAPTER XX.

That when the searching eye of heaven is hid
Behind the globe, and lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen,
In murders, and in outrage, bloody here;
But when, from under this terrestrial ball,
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
And darts his light through every guilty hole,
Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
The cloak of night being plucked from off their backs,
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves!

SHAKSPEARE.

Peter Quin passed the rest of the day in solitude and reflection, with only his own evil thoughts to keep him company; against every visitor his door remained barred: he was in no humor to treat of other people's affairs whilst his own remained in such a critical position. With a spiteful smile he watched more than one client turn with an air of disappointment from the house; the annoyance he inflicted consoled him.

During the hours of daylight the old man supported the sense of loneliness with comparative indifference; but when the dark shadows of night began to fall, they brought with them recollections and feelings which, even in the bustle and occupation of the world, too frequently arise like memories from the grave, to accuse us.

It is a solitary thing to be alone upon the waters—in the desert—or to stand upon the hill-top, far from the hum of human life—the heavens above—the dark, waving forests below and around us; the dwellings of our fellow creatures so far off, that the smoke which curls from their distant hearths is dimly visible in the horizon. But it is far more lonely to sit the only occupant of a deserted home—no living creature near you—watching with gnawing impatience the sluggish dial, whose tardy hand is still far from *pointing to the promised* hour.

It was no small part of the agent's punishment that he felt all this. A hundred times he asked himself if Miles would return—and if he did, whether he would have been successful: a momentous question, when he reflected that his life depended upon the answer. More than once he started with impatience as a step approached the house, listened, and muttered a curse as it died away.

"The villain has deceived me!" he muttered; "and I shall hang alone!"

Alone! Such was the burthen of his regret. He had no remorse for the past—no regret for the crimes he had committed—no repentance.

Some natures are like the rock—they may be shivered by the thunderbolt, but not melted; and Peter Quin was one of these. He had hated the world—lived in defiance of its laws—and felt himself an ill-used person, that they should avenge his misdeeds at last. Thus he wasted the few brief fleeting hours left him for repentance—atonement for most of his evil actions was beyond his power.

The sense of solitude at length became so oppressive that, he rose from his seat and began to pace the apartment. The wretched man tottered rather than walked: no wonder that his steps were feeble—he had not tasted food since the preceding day.

"I have saved others in a position as perilous as mine!" he thought. Then he consoled himself by reflecting on the vengeance he would inflict upon his grand-daughter, should his tool succeed in recovering the child; for he felt that, the infant in his power, he could make what terms he pleased—obtain possession of the proofs—everything which compromised him, and defy her.

"I'll wring her heart!" he muttered.

Till the old man discovered the intense affection she had for her adopted child, he never suspected that she had one.

The signal he had so long and impatiently expected was heard at last—three taps upon the shutter. The expression of despondency upon the wrinkled features of the agent changed to a smile of intense satisfaction—almost of triumph—as he listened to them. With an alacrity which would have surprised him, had he given himself time to reflect, he hastened to the door—which, as usual, he only partially opened.

"Have you succeeded?" he demanded.

"Can't you see I have?" replied Miles, who held what appeared to be an infant in his arms, closely muffled in a shawl; "quick!" he added, "I have been followed! I can hear their steps!"

Peter Quin forgot his wonted caution, and at once admitted him.

"Quick—bring me a light!" whispered the fellow to his employer, who was replacing the chain.

"This way!" said the old man, hastening into the office; "I have a lamp here!"

Miles took advantage of his eagerness, and unhooked the fastening from the door, then darted towards the little parlor, just as Peter Quin was returning to ascertain the cause of his delay.

"I wonder you don't burn a light in the passage!" observed the ruffian, in a cheerful tone; "it is infernally dark!"

"All the better, Miles—all the better!" answered the master of the house, with a chuckle; "I want no curious eyes to pry into my habitation! But where is she? Let me see the brat!"

"Don't be impatient! You will see her soon enough!"

"What mean you?"

"That we must have a little quiet talk together!" exclaimed the man, in an insolent tone, at the same time throwing himself into a chair at the far end of the room; "it is time, I think, that we came to a settlement!"

A suspicion of the truth flashed upon the agent. With a desperate clutch, he seized the burthen which the speaker still continued to hold in his arms, and tore aside the shawl. It covered a bundle of rags merely, which the fellow had artfully dressed up to deceive him.

"Villain!" exclaimed the disappointed Peter, pale with passion; "you shall swing for this!"

"One of us at least will!" coolly observed the man, without attempting to stir from his seat: "I can't do impossibilities! I have searched east and west, north and south—all of no use!"

"And you have returned to tell me so?"

"Of course I have! A gentleman always keeps his word!"

The mocking tone in which this was uttered warned the agent of his danger: with an activity which his visitor must have thought infinitely amusing—for he laughed heartily at the effort—the old man sprang towards the door, evidently with the intention of calling assistance. As his hand touched the handle it opened, and the captain made his appearance.

"Don't agitate yourself, friend Peter!" said the new comer; "remember you are no longer young!"

"But very sprightly!" added his confederate, with a grin.

"The night air is bad for you!" observed the first.

"*And you* look uncommon delicate just *now!" chimed in his companion.* "Why, *you are as white as a chicken!*"

Peter Quin felt assured that neither of the ruffians would have dared to proceed to such extremities had not his death been first resolved on. He was unarmed, old, and feeble, yet his presence of mind did not desert him: fancying that he heard the footsteps of some passengers in the street, he began to utter loud cries of "Murder" and "Thieves!" They were soon stopped: the men whom he had so long held in subjection and treated as his slaves, both sprang upon him, and whilst one pinioned his arms, the other dexterously thrust a gag into his mouth.

"Shall I tie his hands behind him?" whispered Miles.

The captain nodded assent.

"You have often threatened to hang us," said the latter, as soon as he found that his victim was no longer capable of either giving an alarm or of offering the least resistance; "now we have never threatened—men of action seldom do; but we intend to hang you—and although you are undeserving such an honor, with our own hands!"

The eyes of the agent rolled fearfully, and he made a desperate effort to speak: a low, inarticulate sound, something like the hissing of a snake, was all that issued from his lips.

"Dispatch!" exclaimed the captain.

"No hurry!" replied his accomplice, deliberately drawing a coil of rope from his pocket; we have plenty of time before us! Why make a toil of a pleasure?"

In the centre of the ceiling was a strong iron hook, from which at one time a chandelier or lamp had doubtless been suspended. Miles drew the table directly under it, and mounted, to try whether it would bear the weight of the agent: satisfied that it would answer the purpose, he descended, and, approaching Peter Quin, whose feelings—if they could be judged from the ghastly expression of his countenance—must have been horrible, began to loosen his cravat.

"I am not a regular *valet de sham!*" he observed, with a leer, as he undid the knot; but you'll excuse it, for old acquaintance sake—it won't happen again!"

The ruffian seemed to take a fiend-like pleasure in prolonging the mental torture of his former tyrant: it was with the coolest deliberation that he removed the handkerchief, which he carefully folded and placed upon a chair, exclaiming at the same time: "Everything in its place!"

"I wonder how Starlight Will felt," he whispered in the ear of the old man, "as he mounted the gallows to which you sent him? He was a true pal! I promised him that I would serve you out if ever I had an opportunity—and I have kept my word!"

The captain shrugged his shoulders in-

patiently: he was a philosophical rather than a poetical villain; and, so that he disposed of his enemy, cared little for prolonging his sufferings.

"Shall I get his keys?" said the speaker.

"*Afterwards!*" hastily answered his companion. "I begin to feel sick of this!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Miles; "you forget how he would have grinned if he had succeeded in hanging us!"

The reflection stifled every sentiment of pity or remorse in the heart of the desperate man, whom a sense of mutual danger had led to become the confederate of the speaker in his bold design—he permitted the horrible scene to continue, without further observation or remonstrance.

"It's a great pity you have not a better audience!" said the murderer, as he placed the rope round the neck of Peter Quin, "but it's very select—so that must content you! Steady—steady!" he added, as the old man reeled with terror; "the time for dancing ain't begun yet!"

With the assistance of his companion, Miles mounted the agent upon the table, passed the end of the rope through the hook, and made it fast. That done, they both descended, leaving their victim standing alone.

"Throw your handkerchief over his face—curse you!" whispered the captain.

"Can't, it 'd spoil the fun!"

The next instant the table was withdrawn, and the guilty man launched into the presence of that Judge, from whose fiat there is no appeal. When the last struggle was over, and an inanimate corpse hung vibrating before them, the eyes of the murderers met: each started at the sight of the pale face of the other—the sense of danger and the thirst of revenge which had hitherto supported them was gone.

"He deserved it!" said Miles, in an under tone, as if to justify, not to his companion, but to himself, the crime they had committed.

It was true; but the speaker was no less an assassin. It is a question whether man has a right, under any circumstances, to punish his fellow-man by death. We have already discovered that schools are better than gaols; perhaps we shall one day arrive at the conclusion that solitude is a severer sentence than death.

Their crime—like most crimes—was doomed to be only partially successful. It is true they gratified their hatred; but the proofs which Peter Quin held of their misdeeds—the possession of which he had so imprudently boasted would at any time enable him to hang them—escaped their search. *In vain they ransacked* the pockets of the deceased; nowhere could they discover the key of the cabinet—where they suspected they were concealed—and the lock was so ingeniously contrived, that it defied even their experience to pick it. Break it open they did not dare—since it was necessary to their safety that the old man's death should appear the result of suicide.

"He has outwitted us!" muttered Miles, despondingly; "it's all your fault! I would have had the key beforehand—only you——"

"No reproaches!" replied the captain, interrupting him. "Perhaps, after all, the things are not of the importance we imagine! The proofs which, whilst he lived and was capable of appearing against us, might have sent us to the gallows, are comparatively valueless now!"

Before leaving the house, the speaker, who had far more presence of mind than his companion, proceeded to arrange the room so as to give everything the appearance of a suicide: the table was reversed, as though Peter Quin had kicked it from under him, and the cord which pinioned his arms removed.

"I think that will do!" he said, glancing around.

"Yes—yes! Let us leave the place!"

"How?"

"By the roof!" answered Miles; "you don't know half the dodges the old fox was up to! He could at any time communicate with the adjoining house, although we had no means of reaching him! This way—you will see!"

Everything being settled in the office, they groped their way in the dark to the agent's bed-room, in the ceiling of which was a trap door, fastened down by a strong iron chain on the inside. This they raised, and stepped out upon the roof.

"There!" observed the leader, as he let fall the trap; "they will never suspect that any one escaped from the house that way!"

"Never!" said the captain, breathing more freely. "What have you there?" he demanded, pointing to the bundle which his confederate in crime carried in his arms, and which was nothing else than the figure Miles had dressed up to deceive Peter Quin into the belief that he had brought Fanny back to him.

The fellow explained the use he had made of it, and ended by observing, that it had been but a poor night's work, after all, since they had only half succeeded.

"That," observed his companion, "depends upon the use we make of it; at any rate, it has given us time—and time is often success. Whilst he lived," he continued, "I felt that I walked the world with a rope

round my neck and the shadow of the hangman at my heels. Do you know, I have often wondered whether the old rascal were really human or not: he had more cunning than a lawyer—more cant than a priest!"

The first streaks of day began to appear in the east, and from their elevated position they could hear the tread of footsteps in the street below—probably workmen hastening to their daily labor.

Miles observed that it was time to turn in. "Why, what are you thinking of?" he added, seeing that his companion was lost in reflection.

"I am thinking what has become of his grand-daughter."

"Of Martha?"

The captain nodded in the affirmative.

"It's my belief the girl has bolted!" replied the former, with a knowing look; "and has taken with her something that would have done for the old man what he so often threatened to do to us! He wouldn't have been so anxious to get back the child else. Perhaps, after all," he added, "it was her own!"

None knew better than the man who had stolen Fanny from Farnsfield how unfounded was the surmise of the speaker; but he had no wish to make others as wise as himself. He replied by observing, "that the death of her grandfather would doubtless make her very rich."

"Very!" said Miles; "a capital match for some one—and she'll want a husband! My Bet," he added, in a tone as if he were weighing the pros and cons, "is so infernally jealous, or else —— No! it would never do; but you might try—she'd jump at you! But do come in!" he continued, in a tone of impatience; "St. Margaret's has just struck five! It will soon be daylight—we can talk matters over in the morning!"

The captain hesitated no longer, but followed him over the roof, till they reached a similar trap door to the one from which they had quitted the house of Peter Quin.

"You know your room!" whispered the speaker—for he did not wish any of his lodgers to suspect that he had been absent to so late an hour.

"Yes—yes!"

"In the morning, then!"

So saying, the two murderers shook hands and parted. When Miles descended the following day, and inquired for the captain, he was told, to his surprise, that he had left the house at least two hours before.

Years elapsed before they met again.

When Mr. Foster presented himself at the house of the agent, the following morning he found, to his surprise, that the shutters were closed: he knocked repeatedly, but no one answered him. His first suspicion was that, unable to restore the child, the old man had fled, in the hope of secreting himself from justice.

"The old monster!" he murmured; "I was a fool to be duped by him!"

And then he knocked again.

"His perseverance soon collected a crowd of idlers round the door; none could give him any intelligence respecting the master of the house. One facetious fellow observed that in all probability he was gone on a visit to a certain gentleman whose name is not usually pronounced in polite circles.

"I dare say," said a woman who was standing in the crowd, "that Miles can tell you: if any one knows his whereabouts he is sure to do!"

"And who is Miles?" inquired the lawyer.

It was explained that it was the man who kept the lodging-house.

"Ain't the least idea!" replied Miles, in reply to the question which Mr. Foster addressed to him; "I've my own business to mind, without attending to his!"

"Very possibly, my good man!" quietly observed the gentleman; "but as I am quite willing to pay for any information you may afford me——"

At the word "pay," Miles's better-half bustled forward; she was a stout, red-faced, virago-looking personage, who used to boast that she could cackle in the ken, chaff a flash cove, or puzzle a beak as well as the best of her customers.

"He worn't out all yesterday!" she exclaimed; "that I know—for I saw him closing the crib!"

One of the bystanders good-naturedly interpreted her meaning to the lawyer, who found the technicalities of his profession much less difficult to understand than Bet's classics.

"He must have left home this morning, then?" he observed; a supposition which the tinman who lived opposite negatived, by declaring that he had been at work since six o'clock, and must have seen him.

Mr. Foster proceeded at once to the nearest police office, and speedily returned with such assistance as enabled him to ascertain whether his suspicions were well founded or not. With great difficulty one of the iron-lined shutters was forced open—the door had resisted every effort.

"Curse me!" exclaimed the officer who first entered the room "if Peter Quin has not hanged himself!"

Miles smiled as he heard the words: they sounded like a pledge of security to him.

There was a general shout from the mob around the door. Such was the detestation the wretched man had been held in,

that his hanging himself appeared a fitting termination of his career; several observed that he had cheated the gallows only to give Satan his own at last.

Inexpressibly shocked at the discovery, Mr. Foster, after giving the officers strict orders not to quit the place till his return, left to consult with his client.

CHAPTER XXI.

Wealth comes too late to gladden the lone heart
Whose spring hath fled and borne no beauteous flower—
Whose leaves have fallen ere summer's breath hath faded. OLD PLAY.

THE death of Peter Quin—which justice, hoodwinked by the cunning device of his murderers, falsely attributed to suicide—rendered all legal proceedings on the part of his grand-daughter unnecessary. She was the undoubted heiress of his wealth, which, when his affairs were wound up—as they were at last by the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Foster—was found to exceed the calculations even of those who knew his parsimonious habits, his unscrupulous speculations.

The agent had pandered to the vices and passions of humanity, and his harvest had been a golden one.

Martha felt bewildered when informed by the lawyer that she was mistress of a fortune which placed everything life affords, save happiness, within her reach—that she might command luxury, pleasure—all that earth worships, and find ashes.

The poor desolate creature would have given them all for one kiss from the innocent child whose affection had proved the solitary ray of sunshine which had gladdened her existence; but with the death of the old man every clue was lost. The hope of recovering her appeared so vague, so faint, that even her adviser ceased to allude to it.

About ten days after the funeral, which was conducted as privately as possible—the heiress, accompanied by the lawyer, visited the house where she had passed so many wretched years. It had remained under the guard of the police, to the great disappointment of Miles, who had calculated on securing certain papers which placed him at the mercy of the agent—they were the incentive of his crime.

A crowd of curious idlers gathered round the door as the carriage of Mr. Foster drove up. The neighbors scarcely recognized Martha in her elegant but simple mourning—so different from the old russet gown and faded shawl she had hitherto appeared in.

Some thought that she appeared proud; others observed that she would make the old man's money fly now that she was the mistress of his fortune. Could they have read her feelings, they would not have envied her.

"Courage!" said her companion, as she sank, overcome with emotion, upon one of the ricketty chairs.

"If she were only here," sobbed his client, "I could be happy! I would have strewed her path with flowers, and asked no other joy than witnessing her happiness! You wonder at my tears!" she added; "that this fortune, which the world so envies, does not flush my cheek with pride, my heart with joy: and yet you have children—beings whom you love—for whom you toil, and glory in the sacrifice!"

"True!" observed Mr. Foster.

"What could replace them in your affection, if violence or crime deprived you of them?"

"Not the wealth of worlds!"

"And yet," exclaimed Martha, "you cannot understand me!"

"You forget there is this difference—they are my children," said the man of law; "and nature——"

"She was my child!" interrupted the unhappy woman, impatiently; "not as you suppose—for I have read your thoughts—by blood, but by affection! Till I knew her, I knew not what love was! Could I but find her!" she added, wringing her hands; "could I but find her! Then wealth would indeed be welcome to me!"

"It has its duties as well as its pleasures!" observed her adviser, gravely; "and the latter are seldom permanent if we neglect the former! When I reflect on the solitary existence you have hitherto led, I can perfectly comprehend the strength of your affection for this child! The only thing I cannot understand is the mystery you made of its birth!"

Martha colored deeply: for many reasons she had decided on keeping secret even from the man who had so disinterestedly befriended her, the manner in which Fanny had first been placed under her care. Never would she afford the least clue by which her adopted child might be traced and reclaimed by her family, should she succeed in recovering her.

She had one hope which she had not revealed even to the lawyer.

"This visit is painful—exceedingly painful—to me!" she replied; "there is something in the very atmosphere of the place which chills me! Have you seen that the seals are undisturbed upon the cabinet above? My wish is, that it should be re-

moved with them unbroken to my residence! I have not the courage," she added, with an involuntary shudder, "to examine it here!"

Mr. Foster left the office to visit the chamber of Peter Quin, and assure himself that the cabinet was in the condition in which he had left it. The instant she was alone, Martha raised the board beneath the desk, and secured not only the keys, but a mass of papers and letters, most of them labelled in the handwriting of her grandfather.

One by one she arranged the packets in an empty box, which she discovered in one corner of the office, and directed it to be placed in the carriage.

Before the lawyer returned, the board was restored to its usual place.

"The seals are untouched," he said as he entered the room; "and directly Griffiths arrives he shall see the cabinet conveyed to Harley Street"—the house of the now wealthy Martha. "I believe," added the gentleman, "there are several persons whom you appointed to meet you here—tenants, and——"

"There are two whom I wish to see in private!" observed his client. "Miles—the man who keeps the house next door ——"

"He is waiting!"

"And a woman named Nancy Bright—or rather Mrs. Gurton: she was the faithful servant of my poor mother."

"I will send her to you," said Mr. Foster. "I am aware of your benevolent intentions towards her, and have drawn up the bond as you directed!"

He placed it on the table. Martha read it twice carefully over, and signed her name—the speaker witnessed it.

When the weaver's wife entered the office, she could scarcely restrain the expression of her joy at beholding the daughter of her former mistress restored, as she said, to the enjoyment of her own.

"I have a debt of gratitude to pay," observed Martha.

"Debt!" repeated the woman; "*you* owe me nothing! It's true the old villa—hem—that your grandfather," she added, correcting herself, "by concealing your dear mother's will, robbed me of the marks of her bounty! I wish that had been the worst of his crimes! God forgive him—he had a sad end, with all his riches!"

Her hearer shuddered—perhaps in her heart she was far from feeling convinced that Peter Quin had died a suicide: she trusted not—for his sake, she trusted not.

"The reparation is late!" she observed, *giving her the bond* she had just signed; "*but I can only atone—not recall* the past! This will secure you competence for the rest of your life!"

It was some time before the woman could understand the intention of the speaker; when she did, the expression of her gratitude changed by turns from tears to smiles. Fifty pounds a year to one in her position was wealth.

"You are worthy of your dear mother!" she said, drying her eyes. "The young ones shall go to school now—Dick shall be apprenticed—and——. Oh, bless you—bless you! Send for me by night or day, if ever you think I can be of use to you! I would die to serve you! Have you discovered——"

"Hush!" interrupted Martha, placing her finger upon her lip; "he is dead—and let his fearful secrets rest with him! The grave places a barrier between all human judgment! Let us hope that your suspicions are unfounded!"

The weaver's wife shook her head doubtfully. Nothing could remove the strong conviction she entertained that her former mistress had been unfairly dealt with. True, she had no proof; but suspicions, under some circumstances, are stronger than proofs. Once more expressing her thanks to Martha, she quitted the house, impatient to make her husband and children acquainted with their good fortune.

When Miles was introduced, he entered the room with that forced confident air with which guilt sometimes attempts to mask its terrors. The ruffian even went so far as to hold out his hand. He had for so many years been accustomed to treat her with coarse equality, that he scarcely comprehended the difference between them.

Peter Quin's grand-daughter did not want for tact; she affected not to notice his impertinence. Besides, she had other motives for not quarrelling with him.

"You were in my grandfather's confidence?" she observed, fixing her eyes upon his countenance.

"His confidence, Martha—that is, Miss Martha!" stammered the man. "I thought you knew the old 'un better than that! He employed many—myself, Bet, the captain, and Fogle Jem; but he trusted no one!"

"Where is the man you name?"

"Which one?" demanded Miles, with a certain degree of hesitation.

"The one you call the captain!" answered the woman, sternly; "it was from his hands that I received my child, and he doubtless was employed to tear her from me! Do not trifle with me!" she added; "my wrongs have made me dangerous—I am no longer the patient, suffering creature you once knew, but armed with the means to crush those who have injured me!"

The assassin trembled, and began to feel that, in compassing the death of the agent, instead of obtaining his liberty, he had merely changed masters.

"I am equally prepared," continued the speaker, "to reward those who serve me!"

"By all that is holy!" exclaimed Miles, "I have not seen the captain since—since ——"

He hesitated—something whispered him that it would be dangerous to name the exact day.

"Since when?" interrupted Martha, curiously.

"I am trying to recollect the time!" replied the man, "but certainly not since the death of your grandfather. You may believe me! What interest can I possibly have to deceive you? Besides," he added, gradually recovering courage, "I want to speak with him on my own account! I have sought him in all his old haunts—none of his pals have seen him! Something singular must have occurred!"

"And his chamber?" said the woman.

"Is just as he left it—not a thing has been disturbed. All I noticed was, that a quantity of papers had been burnt by him the last night he slept at my house! The grate was full of ashes!"

"You must find him!" observed Martha, after a pause.

Miles shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"Did you examine the ashes in the grate?" she continued. "Yes, I am sure you did—for you have the cunning of the serpent as well as the ferocity of the tiger! Was there no clue by which he can be traced?"

The fellow gave a knowing smile; perhaps he saw in the question some trait of her grandfather's calculating spirit. Thrusting his hand into a side-pocket, he drew forth a greasy memorandum book. Between two of the leaves were three fragments of paper, partly reduced to ashes: he placed them on the desk before her.

"There," he observed, "are the proofs that I have not deceived you, and that I know nothing of the captain's hiding place! If he only knew," he added, with an impertinent leer upon his countenance, "how impatient you were to see him, he would fly on the wings of—of——"

The look of surprise with which the heiress regarded him cut short the fellow's speech. He stammered and hesitated.

"The wings of what? Pray continue!" said Martha, bitterly.

"Impatience, Martha—that is, Miss Martha, I mean! Lord bless you—you are not the only young lady in the world who desires to see the captain!"

"Indeed!"

Miles was no stranger to the project which his confederate had once entertained of becoming the husband of Peter Quin's grand-daughter, who he imagined would only be too happy to bestow her hand and fortune upon the handsome, reckless adventurer. As to her anxiety about the child, although he knew her to be fond of it, he considered it merely a pretence to disguise her real intentions. Hitherto the prospects of such an alliance had been a matter of indifference to him; now he ardently desired it, as a pledge of security for the past, which began seriously to disquiet him.

Martha partly read his thoughts, and, thinking it might serve her purpose, did not choose to disabuse him.

"Whatever my motive," she said, "it is not to you I shall account for it; it is sufficient that I am anxious to find him!"

Miles pointed to the half-consumed fragments of paper still lying on the desk before her. She began to examine them attentively. They evidently formed part of a letter—the part merely contained the words, "——ly Grange," and the date "November 1st;" the second, "return directly;" the third, "days to live"—the number of days and the name of the party whose expected death was thus announced were wanting.

Martha would have given much for the fragment which connected them. Faint as was the clue, she determined to preserve it—affection clings to the last hope.

"I shall keep these!" she observed.

The man looked disappointed—for they suddenly attained a considerable value in his estimation when he found that the heiress intended to retain them.

"I may trust to your generosity, I suppose?"

"I'll tell you how far you may trust to my generosity!" replied the woman; "for three months longer I will permit you to inhabit the house you occupy rent free—at the end of which time it must be given up. More: I will even assist you with the means to follow an honest calling—instead of casting you upon the world with which you have been so long at war. But to this favor I annex one condition!"

Miles thought not of conditions. At the announcement that he was to give up the house, his coarse, bloated features became livid with rage; it was with the utmost difficulty he sufficiently mastered his passion to observe that he was prepared to pay any reasonable rent.

"No!" said the heiress.

"You can't get a better tenant!"

"I do not intend to let it!" replied the heiress; "it has been the shelter of the wicked and desperate too long! It is but little good I can do in the world—but that

little I will attempt! It is my intention to pull both this and the adjoining house down," she added, "and erect a school for the neglected children in this miserable neighborhood!"

The ruffian, who had hitherto been standing near the desk, staggered rather than walked to one of the ricketty old chairs in the office. He trembled violently and sank into it.

"Pull it down!" he repeated.

"And why not?" demanded Martha, with surprise.

"Oh, nothing—nothing!" muttered Miles, partially recovering himself; "only if you do pull it down, you must give up all hope of ever hearing of the captain again: it is not in this neighborhood that he will ever show his face! No—no!" he added; "you will not pull it down! To be sure you are the mistress now the old man is gone—*but his name is yours!* You will think twice *of* it!"

The woman shuddered: she partially guessed the cause alike of his terror and the confidence expressed that she would permit the house to stand.

"Shut them up, if you will!" he continued; "turn me and Bet into the streets! I dare say we sha'n't starve! But, for your own sake——"

"Enough!" said the heiress, who wished to avoid everything like the appearance of confidence between them. "I shall reflect before I decide. I have other property in the neighborhood which might answer as well!"

"Better!" said Miles, eagerly; "there is the house the Gurtons live in!"

"Instead of thinking of my projects, think of yourself!" interrupted Martha; "use every means to find the man I seek, and rely on my liberality!"

"What if I fail?" demanded the man.

"It will depend upon your future conduct how I shall treat you!" she answered. "Should you be fortunate enough to obtain the information I desire, a note, addressed to me, at the chambers of Mr. Foster, Inner Temple, will be sure to reach me!"

"Why not at your own house, Miss Martha?"

"Simply because I do not intend to intrust you with the knowledge where I reside!" replied the woman. "I know you, and wish to sleep in peace! Now leave me! Serve me faithfully, and rely upon my gratitude; but if I find that you deceive me, you will have no enemy in the world more bitter than Martha Quin!"

"Curse her!" muttered the ruffian, as he left the house; "the old fellow was bad *enough, but she is ten times* more difficult *to deal with: no hold—no grip* on her! If she'd only marry the captain, it would be all right—but if he don't turn up——!"

A low whistle completed the sentence.

When his better half—we might say his two-thirds—for Bet was a human mountain of flesh and bone—heard the result of the interview, woman-like, she wanted to return to see the heiress herself, and tell her in her own expressive language, a bit of her mind: an imprudence which her husband with some difficulty persuaded her against.

"Let her alone!" he said; "she is dangerous to meddle with!"

Disappointed and spiritless, Martha returned to her home, taking with her the papers and packets which she had discovered in the recess, intending to examine them at her leisure. Towards nightfall, Griffiths, Mr. Foster's head clerk, arrived with the cabinet. The little man was now as cringing and obsequious as on their first interview he had been overbearing and supercilious. Like the rest of the world, he knew the value of wealth.

"Any further commands, Miss Quin?" he inquired, in a bland tone of voice, after having seen the cabinet—which he doubted not contained plate and an incalculable amount of treasure, carefully bestowed.

"None!" replied Martha, carelessly; "I shall see your master in the morning!"

It was not intentionally that the heiress employed the word "master"—but in ignorance of the *usage du monde*. She was too humble in mind willingly to tread upon a worm.

Mr. Griffiths, who was dressed in his very best black, colored deeply. His vanity was wounded, and he mentally set her down as a person of little or no discrimination. Had it been one of the junior clerks, instead of himself to whom the word had been addressed, he would have enjoyed the joke exceedingly. Still he evinced no inclination to quit the elegantly-furnished room in which Martha was sitting. Perhaps he contrasted it with the dingy rooms on the third floor which he had inhabited for the last twenty years in Bouverie Street.

"This is a very nice house!" he observed.

Its mistress raised her eyes.

"And very elegantly furnished!" he continued. "You have taste—great taste; and yet I fear, Miss Quin, you must feel lonely at times in it! In fact, I might say very lonely!"

"Yes—yes!" muttered the heiress, impatiently.

"I should only be too happy," continued the persevering little man, without being in the least ruffled by her evident desire to get rid of him, "to call occasionally—as—as a friend! I am a bachelor," he added, with

a smile; "and my evenings are generally disengaged! There could be no scandal at our time of life!"

Martha rose from her seat with a gesture of superb disdain—which forcibly reminded the clerk of Mrs. Siddons, who was then in her zenith—and pointed to the door. It was not the man's presumption which shocked her—it was his meanness. He slunk out of the room with an air very much resembling that of a cur which had been chidden, muttering as he went an audible curse upon what he was pleased to call "the pride of an upstart."

Mr. Griffiths was not the only person in the world who console their wounded vanity by attributing the disdain with which they are treated to the pride instead of the contempt of those with whom they come in contact. From that day, Mr. Foster's client had one enemy the more.

"I was happier in my poverty!" sighed the lonely mistress of so much wealth, as she calmly re-seated herself; "it at least screened me from insult! The bold villany of the captain was less offensive than the cringing baseness of that man! Love!" she repeated, with a bitter laugh; "as if any one but my own darling child could ever love the withered, wretched Martha!"

CHAPTER XXII.

In shabby state they strut, in tattered robe,
The scene a blanket, and a barn the globe;
No high conceits their moderate wishes raise,
Content with humble profit, humble praise.
Let dowdies simper, and let bumpkins stare,
The strolling pageant hero treads on air;
Pleased for his hour, he to mankind gives law,
And snores the next out on a truss of straw.
CHURCHILL.

It is time that we returned to the child—destined, as our readers have doubtless ere this suspected, to prove the heroine of our story. They assisted, as it were, at her birth, and cannot, we are assured, feel indifferent to her progress in the path of life: to some an Eden strewed with flowers; to others, a thorny wilderness, which lacerates the heart.

Fanny—for the signora and her husband had not attempted to change her name, which, *par parenthese*, the little stranger perfectly recollected—made such rapid progress under the tuition of the dancer—who insisted upon her calling him papa—that by the time the pantomine was to be produced, she was sufficiently advanced to appear with the group of children who, in the opening scene were to burst from a bed of flowers, and offer their tribute to the fairy queen.

The moment the dancer first saw her, he declared that she would make an admirable sylph. The ease with which she acquired the various attitudes and steps—the grace with which she executed them—joined to her uncommon loveliness of person, promised to realize his prediction. The signor and his wife both began to love her for her docility and affectionate manner.

To Fanny the change was like that of a being entering on a fresh existence. She was no longer afraid to lift her voice, lest she should rouse the anger of Peter Quin. She had companions—children of her own age—the pupils of her new parents. Still she had not forgotten Martha—the recollection of whose kind voice and gentle manner would often return, check her sunny smiles, and dim her blue eyes with tears.

"You are very good—very good!" she would say to the actor's wife, who at such moments would take her upon her knee, and endeavor to console her; "and I love you dearly! But you are not my own mamma!"

"And who and where is your mamma, my love?"

The question was useless—the memory of the child went no further.

Christmas at last arrived—merry Christmas to those whom it unites with friends, the circle of whose affections has been dispersed by misfortune, or broken by the hand of death; sad Christmas to the being who stands alone in the world, with only memories and regrets.

The important night arrived on which Fanny was to make her first appearance upon the stage—to enter on a career which the good pity and the prejudiced condemn. The theatre was crowded: the boxes with sedate citizens and their happy families—the pit with clerks, shopkeepers' assistants, and that nondescript race comprised under the head of idlers—the gallery with those happy little wretches who for weeks past had been saving their pence to enjoy one day of pleasure and excitement—the sons of toil and poverty.

Behind the scenes all was hurry and confusion; the master carpenter hallooed to his subordinates—the call-boy ran here and there, bewildered with the importance of his task, whilst the property man kept moving and replacing the various tricks which incumbered the wings, anxious for their safety. Every one felt his honor engaged for the success of the pantomine; as for the tragedy—*Hamlet*—no one seemed to care a jot how that went—unless it was Theophilus Snarle, the leading man, who had appeared and disappeared in the character of the melancholy Dane at Covent Garden: on the strength of which he

insisted on being announced wherever he condescended to appear as a star.

This gentleman was noted for two things besides his representation of Hamlet—his umbrella and shake of the hand. The finest day in summer he never went out without the former; the latter he bestowed upon every person on whom he inflicted his tediousness.

Far above the rest of the company in dignity as well as person, soared the manager, Mr. Alfred Bounce, who that night really fancied himself a monarch. As he paced the stage previous to the rising of the curtain, he motioned the ballet girls and supers, with a pompous gesture, out of his way. The actors—pale, hungry-looking wretches, in their spangled finery—respectfully congratulated him on the appearance of the house. It was no longer "governor," but "sir." The reason was plain: there was a prospect of full salaries—a rare event in a minor theatre.

All either were or affected to feel happy, except the low comedian. His reign with the gods during the run of the pantomine was over. The clown had eclipsed him—the legitimate Momus had no chance against his motley rival—who had "Hod Codlin's" and "Typpitywitchet" to back him. For once he sympathised with the leading man, who gravely observed "that he was afraid the play would not be heard."

"Heard!" replied his brother actor; "nothing will be heard till the infernal pantomine begins—the greasy rogues will be silent enough then! I don't think," he continued, "that, considering my position in the profession, I have been handsomely treated! Mr. Wasp offered to write a farce in my peculiar style, and only asked ten pounds! Bounce would not give it!"

"I have equal cause to complain!" observed Snarle, in an under-tone; "the idea of putting up *Hamlet* on such a night! To be sure, it has materially strengthened the bill! Such management! No wonder we have been on half salaries!"

At this moment the manager approached, when both speakers congratulated him in the warmest manner on the appearance of the house.

"Pretty well—pretty well!" said the potentate, as he left them to shake hands with a gentleman belonging to the press; "sure to hit them at last!"

To the great mortification of Snarle, not a line of the tragedy was heard; but no sooner had the pantomine commenced, than the storm of cries, the "cut it short," and the calling of friends in the gallery to acquaintances in the pit ceased; even the *amusement of pelting* the musicians with *orange-peel had lost its charm*: the audience had eyes and ears only for the mysterious dragon which guarded the bower of some imprisoned fair one, and the valorous knight who was gallantly declaring his readiness to perish in some not very clearly defined attempt.

Scarcely a night passes that in the theatres on the Surrey side of the water some generous individual or another does not express the same disinterested devotedness.

As the manager had foretold, the fairy garden proved a blaze of triumph: half a dozen rose-buds, not much larger than so many red cabbages, unfolded their leaves, and permitted the same number of children, whose tender limbs had been cramped for the last half hour, to emerge from their hiding-places and form a group circle round the centre trap through which the Queen of Beauty rose in a shell which might have puzzled the most learned conchologist in Europe to class: it had more colors than the rainbow, and eyes in its valves like those which glitter in the tail of Juno's favorite bird.

When Fanny, suspended by wires, descended from the flies and placed a crown upon the brow of the signora, the beauty and graceful movements of the child drew down thunders of applause; the enthusiasm was at its height.

"Bless her!" murmured the delighted woman to herself.

"I knew it would take!" thought her husband—who, as the valorous knight, was kneeling before her in his strip dress, ready to change to harlequin at the touch of her wand; "ten bob more, at least!"

This was in allusion to the salary which he expected to draw from the services of his pupil.

The wire was loosened from the waist of the floating sprite, who, descending to earth, danced a *pas seul*. At every step her hair floated like a cloud of gold over her shoulders. At its termination there was a fresh burst of applause, accompanied by cries of "Bravo!" and several sixpences and shillings, which a party of sailors in the pit threw upon the stage.

At the end of the pantomine, which was announced for repetition every night until further notice, by the gratified Alfred Bounce, all was congratulation: the clown, who, overcome by his exertions, lay panting on the stage, shook hands with the pantaloon. The harlequin caught up his adopted child and kissed her.

"Capital! Excellent! Run for six weeks at least!" were, the only exclamations heard.

When the treasurer of the establishment—Mr. Feathertongue—who would have been an excellent low comedian, but for an

unfortunate lisp, which condemned him to a less prominent position in the profession—offered Signor Du Bast the usual shilling for the services of Fanny, it was rejected with contempt.

"Do you compare my daughter and pupil," demanded the tired harlequin, in the tone of a man who felt that for six weeks at least her services were indispensable, "with supers and ballet girls?"

"Chertainly not!" lisped the prompter; "but ith's the thal.!"

"I'll see Bounce myself upon the subject!" observed the signor, cutting short the conversation; "she sha'n't appear again till something is settled!"

Before leaving the theatre, the dancer had an interview with the manager; the latter knew his interests, and Fanny was eventually engaged at the extraordinary sum of twelve shillings per week, which with his usual dexterity, Bounce retrenched, by reducing the number of supers and girls in the ballet.

For three weeks all was smooth and prosperous in the theatre; if the actors murmured, they murmured low, for their salaries were paid; the lisping treasurer no longer skulked from wing to wing when his avocations called him behind the scenes, for fear of being pestered for arrears, which he had no funds to pay—but met the company face to face.

It is a sad truth, that the stage carpenters—on whom the lives of pantominists depend—are never so careless as during a run of success. At the commencement of the fourth week of the pantomine—at the moment when harlequin was supposed to leap through the moon, those who had to catch him were absent. The consequence was, he fell with fearful violence upon the stage. His disappearance ought to have closed the scene.

"Go it, Colly!" whispered the clown, who heard the fall; "Patchy has hurt himself!"

"See what it is!" said the pantaloon; "I'll do the stilts!"

The speaker mounted upon the two pieces of wood, whilst his brother pantominist went to look after their companion, and amused the audience by sundry feats of agility.

The house was in a roar of laughter at his contortions and tricks.

"What is it?" he inquired, as the clown rolled on the stage with a "Here we are!" which never failed to bring down a laugh from the gallery.

"Hurt!"

"Badly?"

"Broken his back, I fear—can't bear them to touch him!"

And the two speakers, who, from the hazardous nature of their profession, might the very next minute meet with a similar accident, continued their efforts to amuse the audience till the mangled body of their comrade could be removed, and so leave room for a change of scene.

Whilst the clown and pantaloon were, to use a theatrical phrase, "gagging" to keep the scene going, the manager and a group of actors had gathered round the unfortunate harlequin, whose groans of agony were mingled with the shouts and laughter of the delighted audience.

Mirth and death! A screen of painted canvass alone dividing them—fit emblem of the world!

"You have only one more scene, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Alfred Bounce, in his most persuasive tone of voice; "can't you try it?"

The dancer partially raised himself upon his elbow, but fell back overcome by the pain which the effort occasioned him.

"You can cut the last dance!" added the speaker, encouragingly.

It was impossible—poor Patchy's back was broken. His last dance was over.

"Get him into the green-room, gov'nor!" suggested the pantaloon, who had left to his brother pantominist the task of keeping the pit and gallery in good humor; "it's no use pressing him!"

Part of a set piece was gently drawn under the body of the sufferer by the actors, who bore him into the green-room, incumbered, as is usual during the run of a pantomine, with the properties and accessories of the stage. With some difficulty the sofa was cleared and their burthen deposited.

"Ladies and gentlemen for the last scene!" shouted the call-boy.

The ballet-girls and children, who for the last two hours had been shivering in their gauze dresses, rushed to their places—one of the actresses replaced the Queen of Beauty in her silver car, and in the midst of the red fire, confusion, and bustle of the tableau, the absence of the harlequin was scarcely noticed.

The curtain fell without a hiss.

"Thank God," exclaimed the manager, "it did not happen earlier!"

"Very lucky, indeed!" observed the prompter. "Is he much hurt!"

"Badly, I fear! Go to Kenneth the first thing in the morning, and see if he has a harlequin on his list! Call a rehearsal at ten, and fine those who are late!"

Whilst Alfred Bounce, *Esquire*, was giving these directions to his subordinate and drudge, a very different scene was taking place in the green-room—the poor dancer

was dying. Both the surgeons who had been called in had pronounced his case to be hopeless—the *vertebræ* was broken.

The poor fellow lay extended at full length upon the sofa—to raise him was out of the question; one arm was thrown around the neck of his wife, who, in her spangled dress, was sobbing convulsively upon her knee by his side; her tears had washed the rouge from her cheeks, leaving a patch here and there, which contrasted painfully with their ghastly paleness. Little Fanny was clinging to her, vainly attempting to console her adopted parent: she was too young to feel the full weight of the misfortune which had befallen them. At a distance were the two surgeons, and yet further, near the door, a group of actors and actresses—some in their tinsel finery, others muffled in shabby cloaks and coats, ready to return home after the performance.

To do them justice, there was sympathy in the hearts and eyes of all. Whatever else may be laid to their charge, the wandering children of Thespis are at least exempt from the sin of indifference to the sufferings of the members of their nomade tribe. Let an accident occur in a theatre, or an unfortunate actor pass through the town, their mite is freely given—frequently at the expense of their next day's dinner.

When we speak of actors, we do not include managers—they are a race apart.

"Don't weep, Carry—don't weep!" whispered the dying man; "your friends will be kind to you when I am gone! You will quit this precarious life, and return to your home! Home!" he repeated; "comfort—respect—no fear for to-morrow—no dread of cold and hunger!"

"I never felt them, Harry!" replied his wife, tenderly; "for they were shared with you! Gentlemen," she added, turning to the surgeons, "is there no hope? Can nothing be done to save him?"

A mournful silence answered her—the poor creature wrung her hands despairingly.

"Everybody at ten to-morrow!" shouted the call-boy, at the door of the green-room.

The clown, who had washed the motley from his face, came shuffling into the room: to have judged from his gait, one would have taken him for a man of sixty—and yet he had scarcely counted his thirtieth summer. Like most of his profession, he was prematurely old: agile on the stage—almost a cripple off—he and Du Bast had acted together in pantomimes several years, and a sort of friendship had sprung up between them.

"How are you?" he said, extending his hand.

It was not the merry "How are you?" which a few hours before had set the gallery in a roar, and delighted the groundlings in the pit. The words were uttered in a tone of mingled feeling and despondency: the speaker was wretchedly ignorant, but he had a heart.

"All over this time!" replied the dancer; "my back is broken!"

"I said so!" muttered his colleague; "I said so! Them *cussed* carpenters—they thinks no more of our necks than if we hadn't a bone in 'em! 'cause we ain't legitimate, as they calls it; and yet they are glad enough to see us when *Roller* and *King Dick* won't draw the sals.!"

There was no less bitterness than truth in the remark of the poor clown. The veriest ranter that ever murdered Shakspeare affects to look down with contempt upon the pantomimist as an intruder in the profession—a feeling which the latter generally repays with interest.

The late Andrew Ducrow used to tell an anecdote, with great glee, of an actor whom he had known in the provinces, at the time he was drawing immense houses by his artistic representations in *Raphael's Dream*. The gentleman felt himself annoyed at having to act with the great pantomimist, and did everything in his power to annoy him.

Ducrow met him the following season in London: he was dressed—to use the narrator's own description—mosiac gold chains, paste rings and brooches had done their worst; nothing could render him more ridiculous.

"How do you do, Mister What's your name?" inquired the manager, in his usual drawling tone of voice.

"Oh! ah! Mr. Ducrow, I believe!" exclaimed the actor, making an effort to recollect him.

"Yes; I am Mister Ducrow, proprietor of Astley's! Give us a look—glad to see you—pass you in at any time!"

The gentleman thanked him with great dignity, but at the same time expressed a doubt whether his professional duties would permit him to avail himself of his politeness.

"Vy, vere are you?"

As the great horse-rider used to confess, he never could get over the double u.

"At Drury Lane, sir!"

The pomposity with which the announcement was made amused Andrew mightily.

He bade the actor good morning, and pursued his way.

The following year he met him again. Alas! for the instability of theatrical greatness—he was out of an engagement! The chains and rings had disappeared; his clothes were old and shabby. The only piece of

ostentation about him then was his shirt-collar.

The actor was the first to recognize the opulent manager, and touched his hat respectfully.

"Vell!" said Ducrow. "Vere are you now?"

The fallen hero of the sock and buskin looked dreadfully confused.

"*Petticoat Lane*, I suppose?" added the wag.

To the credit of Ducrow, he afterwards gave the gentleman an engagement, and finally assisted him to America. The only fault he ever found with him whilst he remained a member of his company, was, that in the tableaux which the manager was so skillful in arranging, he would thrust himself before his *osses*. He meant horses.

"Always fancied himself acting the Prince of Dunkirk," Ducrow used to say, "or Othello," when he related the anecdote.

As we do not often indulge in digressions, we trust our readers for once will pardon us.

Signor Du Bast gradually became weaker. It was evident to all but his wife that his last moments were fast approaching. She, with a woman's fondness, clung to hope, when all else were hopeless. It was so hard to lose him—her only stay on earth—the lover of her youth—the husband for whom she had sacrificed home, friends, station; with whom she had endured every variety of misery except unkindness.

"They will get up a benefit for you, Carry!" were almost the last words he uttered; "and that will enable you and Fan to hold on till the Opera opens; but you had better return to your friends, and don't forget the poor fellow who loved you dearly—very dearly! I know I ought not to have taken you from a comfortable home to follow a fate like mine; but, God bless you! you never reproached me, even when we wanted bread!"

The sufferer prayed—actors do sometimes pray, however bigots may reproach them to the contrary—prayed for his wife and adopted child. Long before daylight he had ceased to exist.

We must draw a veil over the agonies of the forlorn creature he had left behind. She was assisted, more dead than alive—an old cloak wrapped over her spangled finery—to a hackney-coach. The body of her husband was placed beside her—she would not separate from his remains—and conveyed to her solitary lodging in Drury Lane. One of the actresses and the friendly clown accompanied her.

Signor Du Bast was buried in the churchyard in the Waterloo Road. The manager and most of the company followed him to his last resting place. The former, to mark his indignation at the culpable carelessness of the carpenters, on the following Saturday fined them their week's salary, and put the money in *his own pocket*.

A very clever man was Alfred Bounce. He could seize an occasion, and make the most of it as well as any manager in London. The fellow was eloquent too, especially in the playbills; where, as the poor harlequin had predicted, a benefit towards the close of the pantomime season was ostentatiously announced for the widow and child of the late dancer. The house was crowded. Every one applauded the liberality of the manager, who, after charging the expenses—bills, gas, and the actors salaries—generously shared the receipts with the widow.

Like most men of the world, he felt for the bereaved sufferer everywhere except in his pocket: he had no sensibility there.

The few pounds enabled Carry—as her husband used to call her—to indulge in the luxury of grief for a few weeks without parading her sorrows before the public—and so far it was a blessing. The death of the signor did not break her engagement at the Opera House. She had nearly two months before her, and could afford to wait. Fanny was her only consolation. She had become inexpressibly dear to her. Her innocent love had filled the void in her heart caused by the loss of her own child.

Sometimes she thought she would endeavor once more to reconcile herself with her offended family; but a secret presentiment—a dread of their insisting that she should separate from the child she had adopted—restrained her: had it been her own, the case would have been different.

She listened, therefore, to the dictates of her heart rather than those of prudence. Fanny was the last tie which bound her to life, and she determined, whatever might be their fate, that they would starve or live together.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Lands mortgaged may return, and more esteem'd,
But honesty once pawned, is ne'er redeem'd.
MIDDLETON.

About a month after her visit to the old house in Westminster, Martha Quin received a note from Mr. Foster, informing her that her tenant Miles had called twice at the office in the Inner Temple, and appeared most anxious to see her. The writer added, that he had appointed a meeting for the following day, at twelve o'clock.

The anxious woman was punctual to the minute—the hope of obtaining some clue to her adopted child scarcely permitted her to rest; she felt that life without her was but a weary pilgrimage, with all her wealth. Her heart was like one of those rare plants which bloom but once, producing but one solitary flower—her love for Fanny was that flower.

Miles entered the room where Martha was waiting to receive him, with a hang-dog sort of look. He had very much the air of a cur who, having failed its master's bidding, expected to be beaten.

"You have failed?" said the heiress of Peter Quin sternly.

"It has not been my fault!" replied the man in an humble tone. I have sought high and low—been to all his haunts—questioned his old pals! My opinion is, he has left the country!"

The speaker mentally ejaculated the wish that he had been enabled to leave it, too—for since the death of the agent he had lived in a state of continual alarm: it was not his conscience which disturbed him, but his terrors.

"You trifle with me!" observed the woman.

"And what should I gain by that?" demanded the fellow, raising his eyes, and boldly meeting her gaze; "money? Have you not promised to reward me amply? Safety? I am more likely to obtain it by serving than betraying you?"

There was a natural logic in his conclusions, which shook the suspicions of Martha. Miles had appealed to his interests—and she believed him. Had he uttered one word of honor or fidelity, she would have turned from him with scorn.

"How long have you known the captain?" she inquired.

"About fifteen years, Martha—that is Miss—I beg——"

"Call me Martha—anything!" exclaimed the female, interrupting him; "and answer me quickly—for I will not give you time to hatch a lie! Where did you first meet him?"

"At Southwell!"

"On what occasion?"

"I was sent down by your grandfather to obtain a certain leaf from the register of the church The captain, who was then little more than a boy, joined me there! Being young and agile as a cat, he mounted the window of the sacristy, opened the door—and—and we did the job between us!"

Martha was satisfied. She knew that for once the man had spoken truth.

"For a long time he was employed by *the governor,*" continued Miles, "who kept *a tight hand on him;* but he grew tired of that, and started business on his own account—became one of the most desperate highwaymen and housebreakers in London!"

"And murderers too?" interrupted the woman.

"I never knew that!" replied the ruffian, lowering his voice, and endeavoring to hide his confusion. "He was as bold a fellow as ever lived—and that's why his pals gave him the name of the captain! Some said he was the son of a gentleman—others of a lord; but no one ever knew the real truth, unless it was your grandfather!"

His listener reflected for some time in silence.

"I hope," added the speaker, "that you won't turn me and Bet out of the house—it is our bread!"

"On one condition," answered the heiress, "I will suffer you to remain!"

The countenance of Miles began to brighten.

"Which is, that you endeavor to gain the bread you speak of by honest means!"

"Honest means!" repeated the man, in a tone of contempt; "and who would give me credit for them—trust me, or employ me? No one! There is nothing so difficult to convince the world of as a rogue's repentance! I tried it! I had only committed one crime then: not a creature would give me work—that is, in an honest way; but I found plenty to employ me in evil; amongst the rest your grandfather, and—there—you know the rest!"

"I will employ you!" observed Martha.

The eyes of the fellow flashed with a momentary expression of triumph. If he could only worm himself into her secrets, he thought—obtain some hold upon her—he might defy the future.

"But not in the manner you suppose, and probably would wish!" continued the speaker, who had noticed and perfectly comprehended his secret thought. "From the nature of your past life, the haunts of the reckless wretches who live by violating the laws both of heaven and earth must be well known to you?"

"Well, miss, what if they are?"

"I will supply you with the means of visiting them. Use all your cunning to obtain some clue to the hiding place of the captain—find him—and I promise you a sufficient sum to enable you and your wife to emigrate to another land, where you may retrieve the past by an honest future! Do you consent?"

"I should think I do, miss!" exclaimed Miles, either really or affecting to be deeply moved by her offer; "if I had found a friend like you twenty years ago, I might have been a better man! As for the captain, I'll ferret him out, even if I have to

hunt for him in the grave. But he can't be dead—I must have heard of that!"

With this arrangement Martha dismissed him: whatever his delinquencies, she felt that she was not called upon to punish them. By permitting him to remain in the house, she secured an agent on whom she vainly imagined she could rely, to assist her in her search after her adopted child.

"Have you succeeded?" inquired the lawyer, with a friendly smile, as he entered the private office, where the interview between his client and Miles had taken place.

"Not yet!" was the reply.

"Perhaps you had better trust the affair into my hands," suggested Mr. Foster; "by employing the police, we shall soon obtain some trace of the man you seek!"

"No—no!" interrupted the woman, hastily; "it would place him on his guard! Once alarmed, he might find means to quit the country! He has long been at war with justice! By-the-by," she added, with the air of a person who suddenly recollected some circumstance of trivial importance, "in looking over my grandfather's papers, I discovered a hand-bill in which your name is mentioned!"

"Mine?"

His client laid before him the paper describing the disappearance of George Maitland, offering a reward for any intelligence which might lead to his discovery, and referring parties to Mr. Foster, Solicitor, Inner Temple.

"It was connected," said the lawyer, "with one of the most extraordinary affairs in which I have ever been engaged!"

"Am I too curious in asking the nature of it!"

"Certainly not!" replied the gentleman.

He at once proceeded to relate to her the visit of George Maitland to his friend Edward Trevanian—his quitting Farnsfield, and his mysterious disappearance in London.

"Strange!" said Martha. "Did you never discover any clue?"

"Not the least!"

"Was he married?" she added.

Mr. Foster replied in the negative, and added, that his family had long since given up all hope of ascertaining his fate.

"Trevanian!" repeated Martha, half aloud; "I have certainly heard that name before!"

"Not unlikely!" observed the lawyer; "Sir Richard Trevanian is one of the oldest baronets in the kingdom!"

"Had he any interest in——"

"You have suggested a question," replied Mr. Foster, "which I have asked myself a hundred times! Strange that the same idea should have struck us both! Interest at the time of George Maitland's disappearance he certainly had not; besides, he is a man of unblemished reputation! It would be unjust to suspect him!"

His client smiled. Her grandfather's papers had given her much better data for forming a correct judgment of the baronet's real character than the speaker possessed. Shortly afterwards she took her leave.

Brief and apparently unimportant as had been their conversation on the subject, the man of law could not dismiss it from his mind. He could not comprehend how his client had jumped to a conclusion which had more than once forced itself upon his own mind.

"Had she been aware of the will!" he thought, "I could understand it!"

Martha was not aware of the will; but she had read the private memoranda of Peter Quin.

Sir Richard and his family still continued to reside at the hall. His son had just been gazetted to a cornetcy in the Guards—one of those fashionable, crack regiments, as they are termed, in which dissipation and folly run the race of ruin: the promising youth was about to leave home to join. His father was to accompany him to London, to introduce his heir to the world.

The family were seated at the breakfast-table, when the butler brought in the letter-bag from the village post-office. One letter particularly excited the baronet's attention—it was sealed with black. He immediately broke the seal.

"No ill news, I hope!" observed her ladyship.

"You shall hear!" replied her husband, reading aloud; "'Brierly Grange, September the twenty-fourth. Honored Sir,—It is my painful duty to inform you that your cousin, Sir John Mordaunt, expired last night. Every search has been made, but no will has been found. The general impression is, that he died intestate. As no arrangements for the funeral can take place till your arrival, I trust soon to have the pleasure of seeing you here.

Yours, very respectfully,

"'JOHN MORTLOCK, Steward.'"

"What a bore!" exclaimed Walter Trevanian; "just at this time!"

His mother smiled. She did not think the prospect of an additional eight thousand a-year merited the appellation her son bestowed.

"You are so impatient!" she said.

"Has the old fool left us anything, then?" demanded the young man.

"You hear!" answered his father, gravely, "that Sir John died intestate! We, in all probability I am his next heir!"

"Probability!" repeated the youth.

"I must start for Berkshire instantly!" continued the baronet; "such interests ought not to be trifled with! It will only delay our journey three or four days," he added; "or, if you prefer it, you can accompany me!"

Walter Trevanian did prefer it. He was tired of home—for his naturally selfish heart was a stranger to the affections and ties which ought to have hallowed it.

Here it may be as well to explain what his father meant when he said that in all probability he was his cousin's heir. The late Sir John Mordaunt had an only son, who had married a person of humble birth and doubtful reputation—in his indignation he had discarded him: the young man died shortly afterwards, leaving a widow and son totally unprovided for; but so many years had elapsed since they had been heard of, that it was more than doubtful whether they still existed.

Most fervently Sir Richard Trevanian hoped they did not—it would have been eight thousand a-year out of his pocket.

That same day, accompanied by his son, he started for the Grange, mentally calculating during the journey his chances of the rich succession—to the importance of which Walter was now fully alive.

On their arrival at the house, the air of respect and deference with which the steward, lawyer, and domestics of the deceased received them, confirmed their hopes that nothing had been heard of the heir; still they would have given something to have possessed a certificate of his death.

Had Peter Quin been still living, perhaps the accommodating agent might have procured them one.

After a hasty dinner, the party adjourned to the library.

"A sad affair!" replied the steward; "so sudden!"

"Very, Mortlock!" replied Sir Richard Trevanian, trying to look grave.

Walter yawned: he was impatient to join his regiment—to sport his dashing uniform—to indulge in a wider field the vices which had procured him no very enviable reputation at Farnsfield. The prospect of the inheritance scarcely compensated for the delay.

"Most unpardonable thing in Sir John!" said the lawyer—who had long been in the interests of the expectant cousin—"to leave his affairs in such confusion!"

It was suggested that the estates were entailed.

"But not the personal property!" continued the man of law—"which amounts to a hundred thousand pounds, at least! But the first thing is to arrange respecting the funeral."

"I think, gentlemen," exclaimed a voice near them, "I can spare you that trouble!"

They looked up: during their conversation, a stranger, followed by the housekeeper and the valet of the late baronet, had entered the room. He was a tall, resolute-looking man, apparently about thirty or thirty-two years of age: if his appearance was not altogether gentlemanly, it was striking—one of those faces which once seen are not easily forgotten; he had an eye like a vulture's, raven hair, and might have been considered handsome, but for a bitter, sarcastic expression about the mouth."

"And pray, sir, who are you?" demanded the baronet, haughtily.

"Your cousin, Sir John Mordaunt!" replied the stranger, with a smile—at the same time extending his hand to welcome him.

"What! you won't take it?" he said—seeing Sir Richard draw back; "as you please—your displeasure, after all, is very natural!"

"I do not understand you, sir!"

"I perfectly understand you, Sir Richard! For years you have calculated on being my grandfather's heir—the intention, no doubt, was praiseworthy—to accomplish which you left no means untried to keep alive his anger against his son, who had offended him—not hesitating even to slander the dead!"

"Infamous!" exclaimed the baronet.

"Exactly what I think of it!" was the cool rejoinder.

"You must retract this calumny, or——"

"Prove it!" said the stranger; "it is only just I should do so! Well, then, Sir Richard—thanks to the fidelity of these attached servants of my family—your numerous letters to my grandfather are in my possession. I am in a position also to prove the nature of the affectionate inquiries you made after me, through the agency of one Peter Quin. As to my own identity," he added, "that cannot be disputed! This woman," pointing to the housekeeper, "was present at my birth! The valet has known me from childhood!"

Both the domestics declared that from the time of his birth a greater period than a year had never passed without their seeing him.

The identity of the heir was therefore complete.

Sir Richard Trevanian reflected for a few moments: the inheritance he had intrigued for evidently had escaped him. It remained with himself whether he was to suffer in reputation as well as in fortune. By an act of graceful recognition he might avoid the latter disgrace. His mind was

quickly made up—he extended his hand frankly.

"Welcome, Sir John Mordaunt," he said, "to the home of your ancestors! I at once admit your claims! Let the past be forgotten!"

"Willingly!" replied his cousin; "I have no wish to rake up old grievances! No one desires more ardently than myself that *the past should be forgotten!* The page is a painful one!"

The tone in which these words were uttered proved to the baronet that the speaker was sincere. He gazed upon him with a mingled sensation of fear and respect: the man who could baffle him must possess no ordinary energies. One circumstance puzzled him more than all the rest. He could not comprehend how he had become acquainted with his transaction with Peter Quin, whom he vainly imagined he had deceived as to his real name and quality. He mentally resolved, on his arrival in London, to see the agent, and discover, if possible, a clue to the mystery.

He had yet to learn that the unscrupulous instrument of his villanies was dead.

To his surprise, he discovered that his cousin was a man of the world, equally ready for attack as defence—close as a tombstone on the events of his past life—the point Sir Richard so ardently desired to arrive at.

"I always imagined," he said, "that you had died abroad!"

"It was so given out, I believe!" replied his cousin, carelessly.

"Then you have never been on the continent?"

"Occasionally."

"Married, I presume?"

"No!" replied Sir John; "and most probably never shall be! In which case I need not remind you that you are my heir!"

Sir Richard Trevanian looked as if he considered the chance but a poor compensation for the loss of eight thousand a-year.

Although politely pressed to remain for the funeral, he declined, pleading as an excuse the necessity of his son's immediately joining his regiment. The following day he took his departure for London.

"Go!" muttered the new baronet, as he saw him drive from the Grange. "A blacker villain never darkened the doors of an honest man! A villain without temptation, too! Hunger never pressed him—he never knew what it was to pace the streets without a shelter to fly to—the hounds of justice on his track! But I have baffled them at last!" he added; "at last! The prize has been worth suffering and sinning for!"

Immediately after the funeral of his grandfather, the owner of Brierly Grange pensioned off all the old servants, except the house-keeper and valet—those he retained; the latter he named steward, in the place of John Mortlock, who had for so many years been in the confidence of his disappointed cousin.

When the neighboring gentry called to condole with him on his loss, they thought it somewhat singular that Sir John Mordaunt never returned their visits, or received them personally; the excuse was, either that he was indisposed or engaged.

Strange that a man who had just succeeded to a baronetcy and eight thousand a-year should thus seclude himself from the world.

They were still more surprised when, after a sufficient time had elapsed for him to settle his affairs, they heard that he had taken his departure for Italy, and that Brierly Grange was to let for a term of years.

Some time elapsed before any notice was taken of the advertisements; and the housekeeper began to fear that the place would remain all the winter without a tenant, when, one morning, a plain but handsome carriage, without any armorial bearings, drove up to the principal entrance.

A lady wished to see the house. Mrs. Everett—the name of the housekeeper—conducted her through all the principal rooms, explained the convenience of this arrangement, expatiated on the prospects, southern aspect, and healthiness of the situation. The fact was, the garrulous old woman began to feel tired of living alone.

Instead of inquiring about the house, to her astonishment the visitor began questioning her most particularly respecting its owner.

Was Sir John Mordaunt young? Dark or fair? Likely to remain long abroad? The female cicerone demanded nothing better than to reply to her. It was so long since she had found occasion to use her tongue, that the opportunity was a relief to her.

The marriage of the late baronet's son and his banishment from the paternal mansion, were freely related; but when the curious visitor began to inquire how the present one had passed his youth and riper years, either the prudence or the fidelity of the faithful domestic took the alarm.

She could inform her nothing upon that point—absolutely nothing.

"There appears a degree of romance in his history," observed the lady, "which has interested me! Is there a portrait of him in the house?"

A dry negative was the reply of Mrs. Everett.

"He must have suffered greatly!"

The housekeeper thought he had, but

knew nothing positive upon the subject.

By this time they had reached the picture gallery—hung with the portraits of the Mordaunts for many generations. They were an ancient family, and had evidently taken much pride in the collection—which commenced with several Holbeins—warriors and dames who had flourished in the court of Henry VII, and his profligate successor; there was a succession of beauties, who had sat to Lely, Gainsborough, and Reynolds, down to the portrait of the last Lady Mordaunt, by Lawrence—one of his earliest and most graceful pictures.

All were carelessly glanced over in their turn, as the housekeeper enumerated the names and titles. At last they came to a frame from which the canvass had been removed.

"Whose portrait should be there?" inquired the lady.

"The father of the present baronet!"

"Could she see it!"

Mrs. Everett led the way to her own room, forgetting, in her anxiety to oblige her visitor, that it was so like his son, it might pass for him.

No sooner did the stranger fix her eyes upon it, than a smile of satisfaction rested for an instant upon her features. She contemplated it closely, turned away, and then went back to examine it again.

"Who has the letting of the house?" she demanded.

"The steward, madam."

"Do you know the terms?"

"No."

"No matter!" replied the singular woman: "whatever they are, I agree to them! From this day I am the tenant of Brierly Grange! Tell the steward to write to my lawyer, Mr. Foster, of the Inner Temple—he will arrange the details!"

"What name?" said the astonished housekeeper, as she preceded the speaker to her carriage.

The lady gave her card and drove off.

Miss Mendez was the name, engraved in small old English letters upon it.

Our readers have not forgotten that Martha Quin, by the will of her mother, was to assume the name of Mendez.

CHAPTER XXIV.

And on that fair, broad brow were wrought
The intersected lines of thought;
Those furrows which the burning share
Of sorrow ploughs untimely there. BYRON.

THE *season of His Majesty's* Theatre promised to be unusually brilliant. The short-lived peace which was just concluded permitted several of the great *artistes* of Italy—hitherto known to us by reputation only—to visit the metropolis of England, and exchange their foreign notes for British bullion.

The fashionable world was in a state of unwonted excitement. Peeresses intrigued for boxes in the royal circle with as much perseverance as their lords and masters did for the honors of the state. A new mania, like an epidemic, had set in, and the symptoms were most violent. Music, which is gradually becoming a taste among us, was then merely a rage. Many who affected the airs of connoisseurship, and raved about the opera, in reality were attracted only by the ballet—they could understand that.

The director knew his real interests, and catered accordingly.,

We often complain of the corrupt days of the Regency of George IV. We question whether the tone of morality—especially in the theatrical world—has improved since then. Managers did not brave public opinion by announcing that their theatres were under the direction of their mistresses—the engagement of an actress or dancer did not depend on her having a friend who would take a private box for the season.

It was left to the cynicism of the present day to tolerate such scandals.

The stage! How quickly the illusion vanishes with those who, misled by the false glitter of the scene, poetical temperament, vanity, or a love of Shakspeare, embark youth, talent, and reputation on its deceitful promises—for one that succeeds a hundred are shipwrecked. It is like a sea whose waters flow but in one direction—*from the shore*; there is no returning tide: those who would escape the current, must brave it manfully.

To the artificial atmosphere of the Opera House, Fanny was led not by taste or ambition—she was too young to entertain such feelings—but by the iron hand of Necessity; the change appeared to her like fairyland; the blaze of light, the rich dresses, the *troupe of figurantes*—all older than herself, who struck by her beauty and grace, made her their pet—their plaything—bewildered her.

She was like some careless, happy butterfly, sporting over a field of poisonous flowers—pleased with their brilliant colors, unharmed by the venom they exhaled—her heart and mind being guarded by the holy shield of innocence and childhood.

"What an angel!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Adel, the principal *coryphee*; "in less than ten years she will give many a pretty fellow the heart-ache!"

"And her own!" observed one of her companions, with a sigh.

"Like the rest of us, *ma belle!*" replied the dancer, shrugging her shoulders. "It is so long since I lost my heart, that I scarcely recollect having possessed such a thing!"

"I pity him that found it!" retorted the former, with a sneer.

There had long been a rivalry between the speakers; they hated each other most cordially, as actresses only know how to hate.

The two great stars of the season were at last announced. The first was Mademoiselle Cherini—a mezzo soprano—who had long been one of the idols of La Scala and the San Carlos. She was exceedingly beautiful, but her beauty was of that overpowering kind which commands admiration rather than attracts. Like most of the daughters of sunny Italy, she was capricious, gifted, passionate and revengeful. Her appearance created a furor amongst the *dilletanti* lordlings, whose homage she received with the air of a Juno, rather than the reserve of a vestal.

London presented a new field of triumph to her ambition; but, like most triumphs, it was clouded. She dreaded the arrival of a young singer—Madame Garrachi—whose fame had already occasioned her many a sleepless night. She had never seen her, but she detested her by anticipation.

If the success of the first of these two rival *artistes* was great, that of the second was overwhelming; the freshness of her voice, the brilliancy of her execution, the deep feeling and energy of her acting, produced an excitement beyond mere admiration—it was enthusiasm. The ladies dressed their hair *a la Garrachi*—the men swore by her beauty. Mademoiselle Cherini was eclipsed—her nights were no longer *par excellence* the nights of the season.

Fanny—who had been selected as one of the pages in the opera of Semiramide, on account of her childish beauty—was upon the stage when the *prima donna* commenced her first cavatina; the child had heard Mademoiselle Cherini several times with wonder and delight; but at the gush of melody which the new *artiste* poured forth, all the dormant sensibility of her young heart was awakened. To the terror and astonishment of the *coryphees*, she burst into tears and sobbed audibly.

For an instant the singer appeared disconcerted.

"Bring her off!" exclaimed the stage director, in a loud whisper.

Adel led her to the wings and resigned her to Signora Du Bast, who vainly attempted to calm the excitement of the child.

"Don't be angry, sir!" said the poor woman; "It shall not occur again!"

"What is your name?"

"Du Bast, sir!" replied the widow, humbly.

"Go to the treasury," replied the director, "receive what is due to you, and never set foot in the theatre again! Who ever heard such——"

The thunders of applause from the front of the house which accompanied the conclusion of the scene, prevented the rest of his speech from being heard. As the actress quitted the boards, the Duke of Debonshire, who was standing near, threw over her shoulders the magnificent cashmere which he had been holding patiently for the last half hour, and felt himself honored by the office.

The man who held the shawl of the prima donna must be a distinguished amateur! Who could dispute his claim, after such an honor? To be sure, his Grace was exceedingly deaf, and never could whistle the first four bars of "God Save the King," correctly; still his taste was undisputed; he had given a hundred proofs of it, in the shape of diamond bracelets and rings, to most of the great singers of the day.

"*Brava, brava!*" lisped the duke—for he invariably affected Italian when speaking of music.

"Where is the child?" demanded Madame Garrachi, without replyiug to the compliments of her noble admirer.

The question was asked in English—for the artiste was not only a musician but an accomplished linguist. Many of the old frequenters of the opera, we doubt not, will will recognise her by that trait.

The stage director advanced, cringing and bowing to the ground.

"I have already dismissed her and her mother, madame!"

"Dismissed her?"

"And forbidden her ever to set foot in the theatre again! The annoyance shall not be repeated!"

"Then you have acted very wickedly, sir!" replied the singer, her expressive countenance flushed with indignation. "The tears, the sensibility of that poor child—were far more flattering to my feelings as an *artiste*, than the applause of the audience, the compliments of the undiscriminating!"

"Certainly!" exclaimed the Duke of Debonshire, not supposing for an instant that his illustrious imbecility could be comprised in the category of the latter.

The director appeared thunderstruck.

"You will retain their services?" said the lady in an imperious tone.

The gentleman bowed as if he had re-

ceived an order from the lips of royalty.

Taking the arm of his grace, the actress passed on to the green-room: in her passage, Signora Du Bast, who still held Fanny in her arms, dropped her a humble curtsey—she had heard what passed.

"Is that the little girl?" inquired Madame Garrachi, at the same time placing her hand on the long, silken curls of the child.

"Yes, madame!"

"Does she sing?"

"Do the English ever sing?" demanded the Duke of Debonshire, playfully; "It is only to the daughters of your sunny land that spell is given!"

The widow knew the high rank of the speaker—his blue ribbon and diamond star awed her—she did not venture to contradict him.

The *artiste* was a mother: she stooped and kissed Fanny on the forehead, then drawing a flower from a superb bouquet which she carried in her hand, dropped it playfully in her bosom, and passed on with the noble amateur.

Had our heroine been an Italian instead of an English child, his grace would have been in ecstacies with her beauty—she would have been *carina carrissima angelo del amore*, and heaven knows what expletives besides; as it was, he was too much occupied to notice her.

The stage director neither forgot nor forgave the humiliation he had received.

We can conceive nothing more weary to the mind as well as body, than the life of a *figurante*. Rehearsals from ten to four, then hurrying back to prepare for the toilsome duties of the night, the hasty meal, dresses to arrange, the long wait, the return home jaded and worn out—and all for a pittance, which a lady's maid would turn up her nose at.

Such was the life which Signora Du Bast for many years had followed. Whilst her husband lived she endured it for his sake—endured it firmly—there is a wondrous degree of strength in woman's love; but since his death, the nameless fever which saps the very roots of life had slowly been undermining her health.

Before the season was half over, she was stretched upon a bed of sickness.

Then came poverty, with its hideous scowl, staring her in the face. She had but two friends—and they unfortunately, had little to bestow beyond their sympathy. One by one the relics of former respectability were parted with—her husband's watch—even to her wedding ring.

With her own engagement—thanks to the enmity of the director—Fanny's had *ceased.*

One of their most constant visitors was one of the late signor's pupils—a merry, light-hearted girl, about fourteen years of age, named Sally Carroll—who considered herself fortunate in an engagement of fifteen shillings a week at His Majesty's Theatre. She generally came after rehearsals to sit an hour or two with the poor widow—and, not to lose time, brought her spangled finery with her.

On Sundays she brought her dinner, which she shared with her less fortunate friends.

"For me it will soon be over!" one day observed the sufferer; "in this world I have now nothing to hope or fear!"

Poor Fanny, young as she was, understood the import of her words, and burst into a passionate flood of tears; throwing her arms around the neck of the woman who had been a second mother to her, she implored her not to leave her, but to take her with her.

Sally vainly attempted to offer some words of consolation.

"What will become of her," sighed the widow "when I am gone?"

"She shall come and live with me!" replied the warm-hearted girl! "I am quite established now Kenneth has procured me an engagement at one of the winter theatres; we shall not starve—shall we, Fanny?"

Fanny was too much overcome with grief to reply to her.

"So young!" continued the dying woman, speaking to herself rather than to her visitor; "and promising to be so beautiful!"

"Don't have such melancholy thoughts!" interrupted Sally. "I promise you faithfully that I will take care of her—watch over her as if she were my sister!"

The widow sighed. It was a slender hope—still it was one.

"If I had only been an Italian, or even a French girl," continued the speaker, "I might have been rich enough for both of us! Do you know," she added, "that I have often thought of changing my name from Sally Carroll to Mademoiselle Coulon. It would look much better in the bills. Adel, who can't dance half as well as I can, gets two pounds ten a-week, wears a gold watch, silk dresses, and has three pairs of bracelets! Perhaps I shall one day have bracelets, too!"

The woman shuddered. She knew the price at which the silk dresses, bracelets and watch of Mademoiselle Adel had been obtained.

"No, Sally—no!" she said; "better wear a ragged gown, with a pure heart!"

The girl colored. These few words explained to her a mystery which she already half surmised; but the atmosphere of a the-

atre is like that of a hot-house—it forces the growth if not the vigor of the plant.

"I shall never obtain them as Adel has done!" she replied. "If I am not too good, I am at least too proud for that!"

There was a knock at the door of the chamber. The speaker rose to open it, fearing it might be the landlady, who began to be impatient for the last week's rent. She was not mistaken; but, to her surprise, the woman had laid aside her bullying tone, and was almost civil.

"How is she?" she inquired.

Sally Carroll shook her head, and pointed to the bed.

"Ah, bad enough, no doubt! There is a gentleman below who has been making all sorts of inquiries respecting her!"

"A gentleman?"

"Yes—a parson, I take it!" continued the landlady; "he speaks like one! But perhaps, after all, he is only one of the *Methodies!* He says he has come a long way to see her!"

On hearing that a gentleman had come from a distance to visit her, the widow became very much excited. Raising herself from her pillow, she eagerly demanded his name.

"He wouldn't tell me!" replied the woman; "but he promised to pay the rent; and, for the trouble you have given me, if anything should ——"

"I'll go and speak with him!" exclaimed the ballet girl, raising her voice, on purpose to prevent the sufferer from hearing the conclusion of the landlady's brutal speech.

"He is down in the parlor below!" observed the woman.

In a few minutes Sally returned.

"She had seen the stranger," she said, "who appeared quite a gentleman, and very much wishes to see you!"

"His name?" once more demanded Signora Du Bast, impatiently.

"He bid me say that it was William."

It was her brother. In a state of dreadful agitation she sank back upon her pillow. She had only fainted; but Fanny, imagining that she was dead, began to scream piteously, calling on her by the most endearing names not to die and leave her.

In the midst of this painful scene the gentleman made his appearance. He was tall and good-looking; his features not unlike his sister's, but their expression was widely different. There was a sleek, sanctimonious, self-righteous air about him which savored of hypocrisy.

"William!" exclaimed the dying woman. "Brother! You here?"

"Hush!" said her visitor. "We are not alone!"

Sally *and the landlady took* the hint and quitted the room: the latter, faithful to the curiosity of her sex and calling, would fain have remained upon the stairs to listen—but her companion insisted on her descending with her. Young as she was, she felt that it was no affair of theirs, and that the confidence of the death-bed should be sacred. Fanny alone remained.

"You here?" repeated his sister.

"Are you not glad to see me?"

"Yes, if you bring me the only consolation which at this hour I can receive—the pardon of an angry parent!"

The gentleman glanced at the crape upon his hat, which he still held in his hand. The eyes of the female followed his.

"Dead?" she said, after a pause.

"Even so!"

"And unforgiving to the last? And yet my fault has been bitterly atoned! I have suffered the pangs of hunger, cold and want," continued the widow; "but they were nothing to the agony I endured when I beheld my child cast as I am now upon a bed of sickness—deprived of all save the affection of its unhappy parents!"

"This then is not your child?" eagerly observed her brother.

"By adoption only!"

The reply appeared to afford some secret satisfaction to the pious-looking gentleman.

"Your mother pardoned you before she died!" he said, after a pause; "she was one of earth's saints, and would not quit the world at enmity with one whom she had once so tenderly loved. This misery," he added, "is fearful: and yet perhaps Providence sent it for its own good purpose—to chasten you by suffering, ere it called you to a better state! Why did you not write to me? I, at least——"

"It would have been useless, William!" interrupted the woman; "*and you know it would!* I wrote to you when my poor child was ill—dying—when heaven deprived me of a husband's protection; but never received a line—a word of consolation! Your heart was hardened against me, and is still!"

"If so, why am I here?"

"Why?" repeated his sister; "ay, why? Unless," and she fixed her eyes upon him with a searching expression, "the world's perishable dross has brought you! Our mother may have more than pardoned her erring child—she may have done her justice, or died intestate! If so, tell me—tell me!" she added, imploringly; "that I may know Fanny will not be left destitute!"

Now this was the very last thing which her brother wished to converse about. Despite his cajoleries, their parent at the last moment had done justice to her daughter, and left her fortune equally between them. Could he have secreted the will

and grasped it all, he would have willingly done so. Fortunately it was in honest hands.

"Let us not converse, Caroline," he said, "upon worldly matters now! Think of the future—of the life you have led—of the sin of disobedience—the disgrace you have brought upon your family by flying with one of his reprobate profession!"

"Do not insult the dead!" exclaimed the widow, whose strength was rapidly failing her; "he was good, true, and loving! The cant of religion was a stranger to his lips, but its word was in his heart! The man you affect to despise would not have wronged his neighbor, injured a worm, or judged his fellow-creatures harshly!"

The gentleman muttered something about benighted ignorance.

"Can you say as much?"

Instead of replying to her question, he began to pray—to offer up not the words which breathe of peace and consolation—but of judgment, the future, and its terrors. Perhaps in his bigotry he looked upon her as lost for having married an actor: with his narrow views of salvation, he could not comprehend how such a man could be a Christian.

And yet Shakspeare was one.

During the exordium, which lasted a considerable time, Signora Du Bast appeared to be plunged in profound meditation. She might be the victim, but she was not the dupe of her brother's hypocrisy: she knew him too well for that.

"William!" she exclaimed, when he had finished his prayer; "you have not answered my question yet!"

"What question?" he demanded, although he perfectly understood what she alluded to.

"Our mother's fortune!"

"It is mine!" replied the hypocrite, in a calm, unruffled tone. Perhaps he reconciled the lie to his conscience by the reflection that a few minutes, in all probability, would make it so.

"Cruel—cruel!" murmured the widow, in a tone of disappointment, at the same time falling back upon her pillow, from which in her excitement she had partially raised herself; "William, be just! I am dying! Be just to this poor child, who has been as my own in my affliction! Promise me, as you hope—O God, touch his heart!" she added, "and protect her innocence when I am gone!"

"I will not forget your request, Caroline, despite the injurious suspicion which accompanies it! You are faint—have you no*thing to take*?"

He looked round the room.

"Nothing but water!"

He rose and gave her some. Of course it was not his fault that there was neither wine nor fruit to moisten the parched lips of the sufferer with.

"Mamma—mamma!" sobbed Fanny, "who is that man?"

The dying woman attempted to kiss her, but was too weak to raise her to the bed—which her relative no sooner saw, than he took the child in his arms, and placed her beside her adopted mother.

"There, Fanny!" said the signora, repeatedly kissing her, "place your little arms around my neck, and let me feel your kisses on my cold lips! You spoke of prayer, brother, just now," she said; "this child, rescued from vice and misery, is a living prayer, as acceptable to God as any tongue can utter! It is for you, when I am gone, to continue the task begun! Promise me that you will do so—promis mee, William!"

"Rely upon me! I will do something handsome for her—very handsome! You know I never break my word!"

"God bless you and forgive you as you keep it!"

These were the last words his sister addressed to him. Folding the innocent object of her love closely to her bosom, she prayed mentally to Him who is the father of the fatherless. Whilst thus piously engaged, her spirit passed away from earth so gently, that she had been dead some minutes before the cold, pitiless, calculating man—who could find nothing better than water to moisten his sister's lips with—was aware she was gone.

Fanny was the first to perceive it: she remembered the immobility, the coldness of his cheek, when she kissed it, of the poor harlequin, and knew what death was. Her frantic sorrow brought Sally Carroll, and the landlady up stairs.

When they entered the room, the gentleman, instead of consoling the child, was praying at the foot of the bed.

The mistress of the house thought it very strange; but as he had promised that her rent should be paid, of course it was not her interest to make any observation. Still, as she afterwards used to observe, he might have sent for a doctor, or at any rate for a bottle of wine; but no—he had nothing to offer the sufferer whilst living but prayers, and a coffin and pall when dead.

Without taking the least notice of the child so solemnly recommended to his care, he left the room, requesting the landlady to follow him.

"Poor mamma!" sobbed Fanny; "gone—gone! Who will love me now?"

"I will!" replied Sally Carroll, throwing her arms around her neck and kissing her.

"I have no friends or relations in the world —you shall be my sister! We will love one another, and live and work together!"

CHAPTER XXV.

She stands like one who hath lost her way,
And no one near her to inquire it of:
Yet there's a Providence above that knows
The road which all men tread, and can direct
Inquiring justice. . . Passengers that travel
On the wide ocean, where no paths are,
Look up, and leave their conduct to a star!

SIR ROBERT HOWARD.

With a feeling in which perhaps a momentary remorse had some slight share, the unnatural brother caused the body of his sister to be interred by the side of her husband. The funeral was respectable, but conducted at an unusually early hour: he wished to avoid the presence of any friends belonging to the profession he detested.

The landlady of the house, Sally Carroll, and Fanny were the only mourners. He did not choose to risk his respectability by following.

During the absence of the party, he made a careful examination of the drawers and trunks remaining in the room so lately occupied by his sister. Here and there he found a piece of tinsel or spangled finery, which he tossed contemptuously aside. It is not to be supposed that he made this search in the hope of discovering anything of value. No; his object was to destroy any letters or papers which might lead to a discovery of the family name and station of the deceased. He was a prudent man, and had no wish to be talked about.

It was not without a certain degree of curiosity he opened the trunk which contained the clothes which Fanny had worn when the dancer rescued her from the tender mercies of Miles, the handkerchief with which her little arms were bound, and the paper drawn up by the signor describing the whole affair.

"Singular!" he muttered, after he had read it; "quite a romance! Some persons would make a fortune by the mystery —I have no time to fathom it!"

Satisfied that there was nothing else to examine, he carefully replaced the articles in the box as he had found them, and began to reflect how he should dispose of the child; for even he, heartless and selfish man of the world as he was, where interest was concerned, shrank from the idea of leaving one so young, so helpless, to the sport of *the world.*

Under any circumstances, he resolved to take the proofs which might one day lead to her restoration to her friends. Had it been a boy, he would have sent him to sea; being a girl, the case became embarrassing.

"It was a fortunate thing," he thought, "that the woman of the house did not possess the slightest clue to his name or abode."

When the mourners returned, the undertaker and the landlady were called in and settled with.

"In whose name shall I make out the bill?" inquired the man of black.

"In that of Du Bast!"

"Yours, Sir?"

"No matter whose," replied the gentleman, "since you are paid. I am a friend of the family of the deceased—that is enough!"

The same statement did for the woman of the house.

The two children were next called in—for Sally was little more than a child.

"Come here, my dear!" he said; "I wish to speak with you?"

The girl unhesitatingly advanced, bearing rather than leading Fanny with her.

"Did my—hem!—did the late Signora Du Bast ever explain what her intentions were respecting this little girl, in the event of her death?"

"Yes sir!"

"To whom?"

"It was agreed that Fanny should come and live with me. I promised to take care of her!"

"You!" repeated the gentleman, with surprise: "and how can you take care of her? Have you any relations?"

"No, sir!"

"How do you live?"

"By dancing. I am engaged at the theatre, and have a salary of fifteen shillings a-week. I shall get more soon!"

"And with this pittance you are willing to undertake the charge of a mere child?"

"Oh yes!" replied the warm-hearted girl, whose disinterestedness might have taught the professor of religion a lesson. "I love her—her parents were always very kind to me—and Fanny can earn something, too! Besides, if I don't take her, who will?"

This was the very question he had just asked himself—"Who would take her?"

"Very praiseworthy—very praiseworthy indeed, my dear child!" said the gentleman; "such conduct does credit to human nature! But why do you not gain your living in a more reputable manner?"

"What manner, sir?" replied Sally.

The Mentor was silenced. He could censure but not advise.

"I only know how to dance!" added the girl.

The world is ten times more liberal in advice than assistance: the first is so easily bestowed—the latter costs money. There are few who feel for their fellow-creatures in their pockets. Still Mr. Rede resolved to do something for the orphan; he had promised his sister—whose death doubled his fortune—to act handsomely by her adopted child.

He deliberately counted out five guineas.

"There!" he said, as he dropped them one by one into the hand of Sally Carroll—who, in her simplicity, considered five guineas as an inexhaustible treasure—"there is something to assist you in your undertaking! Be a good girl!"

"Yes, sir!"

"And heaven will watch over you!" added the gentleman, in the tone of a man who felt that he had performed a benevolent action.

The well-filled purse from which he had taken the gold slid from his hand and glided like a snake into his pocket. That same evening he quitted London, without leaving the least clue by which his name or residence could be traced: the pride of the mercenary, self-righteous man revolted at the idea of being recognised as the brother of the poor dancer—whose fortune, however, he thought it no disgrace to inherit.

The house where Sally Carroll lodged was kept by a retired actress, named Watkins—one of those odd creatures we sometimes meet with in the world whose hearts are filled with kind feelings and prejudices. She had figured as the Duchess of York with Garrick, in *Richard the Third*—a circumstance of which she was not a little proud, if one might judge by the frequent allusions she made to it—remembered Mrs. Pritchard, and spoke of Gentleman Smith, who married the Countess of Sandwich, as a rising young man in the profession.

She was then sixty, at the very least.

The theatre had been the old lady's world; every feeling, taste, and idea she possessed were in some way or other connected with it; she entertained all its opinions and prejudices: thus she had never forgiven Black Jack—as the elder Kemble was familiarly called in the profession—the sin of acting Macbeth in highland costume. Garrick, she used to observe—*and he was an actor*—wore a laced suit of scarlet and gold; but when Mrs. Siddons abandoned the hoop petticoat, Mrs. Watkins' indignation reached its height. She confidently predicted the downfall of the stage, which she quitted in disgust at the innovation.

Perhaps her seventy-three years—although she never alluded to them—had something to do with her determination. With the slender savings from her professional career Mrs. Watkins purchased the lease of a small house in St. Martin's Court, which she furnished plainly, and let the principal portion in lodgings: the first floor was inhabited by a retired officer, who had been with her nearly six years; an aged German musician, named Weitzer, and his wife, occupied the second; whilst in the third attics were lodged a young painter, named Barry, Mademoiselle Josephine, of the Opera, and Sally Carroll.

The latter paid but little; but, as the mistress of the house used to observe, every little helped.

The ground floor was retained by the old lady and her servant, Meg—a tall, gaunt, grey-headed woman, who had been her dresser upwards of twenty years in the theatre, and looked upon her mistress as something little less than a queen, so deeply was she impressed with the dignity of her manner and speech; for Mrs. Watkins, in quitting the profession, had not ceased to be an actress—her language was still that of the green-room; for instance, she never condescended to ask if the rooms of her lodgers had been swept—it was always, "Are the chambers fittingly arranged for their inmates?"

Her own little parlor was furnished with scrupulous neatness, and not without a certain air of coquetry; the half-dozen chairs and sofa were covered with the brocades which she had worn upon the stage, the curtains were of embroidered muslin, and the walls covered with portraits of her contemporaries—amongst which was the well-known print of Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy—Mrs. Pritchard, as Lady Macbeth—and her own likeness as the Duchess of York in *Richard the Third*, as stately as a hoop petticoat, black velvet, gold, and spangles could make it.

The mistress of the house was seated in the room we have been describing, when Sally Carrol arrived with her *protegee*, each carrying a bundle. With all her liveliness, Sally stood very much in awe of her landlady, who kept a vigilant eye over her. The actress knew the world, its trials and temptations—and her lodger was just fourteen.

"You have returned in time!" said the old lady, in a deep tone of voice, such as Mrs. Siddons must have used when she startled the linendraper by inquiring whether the printed muslin she was about to purchase would wash. "I was about to dispatch Margaret after you!"

"If you please, ma'am," replied the girl, "we couldn't come sooner—they would make us stop to tea!"

"*We!*" re ated Mrs. Watkins, glancing at her mpanion; "it is rather late for visitor

"Yes— t is rather late!" answered Sally, not knowing exactly how to break the intelligence that for the future Fanny was to share her garret with her. "Please Mrs. Watkins, may I speak with you?"

"Speak! I am bound to hear!" was the reply.

"Yes, ma'am; but I want to speak with you alone!" continued the kind hearted girl, fearing lest the sensitiveness of the orphan should be wounded by any objections on the part of the landlady—objections which, *par parenthese*, Sally was determined not to listen to.

"Come with me to my chamber!" said the actress, rising from her seat and walking towards the little back parlor, which she retained as a bed-room; "there we may converse in private!"

Her lodger followed with the air of a child who expected to be chidden, leaving her companion lost in amazement. She could not comprehend what the stately old lady in faded brocade, her white hair turned over a cushion under a fly cap, could possibly have to do with Sally Carroll. It was some time before she could believe she was only her landlady.

"Please Mrs. Watkins," said her lodger, as soon as they were alone, "it is Fanny Du Bast!"

"Du Bast—Du Bast!" repeated the old lady; "ah, the harlequin man!" she added, suddenly recollecting that she had read an account of his untimely death in the paper.

"You knew him?"

"I never knew any pantomime people!" replied the actress, drawing herself up with great dignity.

"Her mother is dead, too!"

"I have heard as much!"

"So, if you please," continued the dancer, "Fanny will live with me: she has no friends, and I have promised to take her, and I will pay you a shilling a week more for the rent. And you won't refuse!" she added, seeing that her landlady hesitated; "it is not much; but I shall be able to pay more for her by-and-by, when the winter theatres open!"

To do Mrs. Watkins justice, it was not the smallness of the sum which occasioned her silence, but surprise: she was touched at the devotion and benevolence of the pleader, whose scanty earnings were barely sufficient to find bread for herself. Before giving her an answer, she made Sally repeat to her everything that had passed.

"Some villain, on my life!" she exclaimed, quoting from the once popular but now forgotten play of *The Curfew*, in which she had enacted the heroine in the country.

This was in allusion to the conduct of the gentleman who had paid the funeral expenses of the signora.

"Oh, no!" replied her lodger, warmly; he was very good and kind! See what nice dresses he has given us! And that is not all!" she added, opening the palm of her hand, and displaying the five guineas.

It was not the sight of the money which decided the actress upon receiving Fanny—for, to do her justice, she had a hand open as day to melting charity; it was the innocence and utter helplessness of the poor little creature left desolate in the world. Had she listened to the dictates of prudence, she would have refused; but her heart was weaker than her head.

"Be it so!" she said; "she shall remain!"

Sally forgot for an instant her habitual respect, her awe of the speaker. Springing to the side of the chair on which she was seated, she threw her arms around her neck and kissed her; then, as if suddenly struck by the enormity of the offence she had committed, stood, with downcast eyes, blushing before her.

"There, that will do!" exclaimed the actress, somewhat tartly. "What manners! But I suppose it's the modern school! I never ventured to do more than kiss Mrs. Pritchard's hand when she commended me!"

"Perhaps you did not love her?" observed the dancer who began to take courage at the mildness of the reproof.

The old lady smiled as she re-adjusted her cap, and brushed the powder from the lace cardinal she wore over her shoulders.

At Sally's request, she undertook the charge of the five guineas, very properly reflecting that the money would be better in her care than in that of a mere child. As for the extra shilling a-week for the room, it was rejected with great dignity—and yet the poor old soul would have been glad of it.

When they returned to the parlor, Fanny was introduced by her youthful protectress to Mrs. Watkins, as her new lodger. The timidity and beauty of the child still further reconciled her to the arrangement. Sally conducted her in triumph to her little chamber, which appeared no longer lonely. She had something to love and exert herself for.

Fortunately the sorrows like the pleasures of childhood, are but transient Fanny gradually recovered from the melan... which the death of the signora had occ... and she became once more gay and chee...

ful. In the evenings, when her companion was engaged in the theatre, her landlady would invite her to pass the time in the little parlor below, where the actress would teach her to recite passages from Shakspeare, or encourage her to sing—for, in addition to the beauty of her mother, the orphan had inherited her rich, flexible voice and exquisite ear for music.

"If I were rich," the old lady would frequently repeat to herself, "what a brilliant education I would bestow upon Fanny!"

During these little rehearsals—if we may so term them—Mrs. Watkins frequently heard the door of the drawing-room quietly open. She knew that the officer on the first floor was listening. He was one of the few persons she had encountered in the world whom she could not make out. He visited no one, apparently was without friends—for he never received any letters; Meg prepared his solitary meals: he was evidently alone in the world.

A circumstance which rendered him still more to be pitied was, that he was blind.

Every Monday he used to send a polite message to his landlady, requesting she would do him the favor to pay him a visit, when he settled his account. On these occasions little conversation had passed between them—for, whatever his sorrows, he kept them to himself.

Shortly after the arrival of Fanny, he one day asked the old lady if she had not lately received an addition to her family.

"I presume you mean Fanny?" was the reply.

At the name of Fanny, the lieutenant—the only name he was known by in the house—trembled violently.

"Fanny!" he murmured to himself; "strange—strange!"

The actress related all the circumstances which she knew respecting her. To her great surprise, her lodger questioned her very closely on the subject of the late harlequin and his wife—the number of years they had been in the profession—and appeared considerably relieved when she informed him that she remembered them in it for at least ten years.

"I have often thought," she observed, "that the long evenings must hang heavily upon your hands! This child seems to have interested you!"

The lieutenant acknowledged that he did feel interested.

"Why not descend and pass an hour or two with us occasionally?" continued the lady; then, as if suddenly sensible that she had compromised her dignity by risking a refusal, she drew herself up to her full height and awaited his reply.

"*You are very kind!*" he said, in a hesitating manner; "it is so long since I mingled in society that—— But if you will not deem the presence of one so little calculated for the world as myself an intrusion ——"

Mrs. Watkins hastily assured him that it would be a pleasure; and he finally promised that on the following evening he would take his tea in the parlor with them.

The old servant, Meg, could scarcely credit her senses when her mistress gravely announced her intention of giving a rout—as she somewhat ambitiously styled the little party to which she resolved to invite all her lodgers: being, to use a theatrical phrase, one of the off-nights, Mademoiselle Josephine, the musician and his wife, and Sally Carroll were all disengaged. As for the young painter, he had more time at his disposal than any of them, except the lieutenant: he was one of those sons of genius whose battle with poverty and neglect had still to be fought.

Mrs. Watkins's preparations for entertaining her guests were limited to a home-made cake and a couple of bottles of currant wine, red and white, which were duly decanted in the course of the afternoon, and placed upon a little ebony stand in one corner of the room, with half a dozen long-necked glasses beside them. Several times before assisting the old lady to dress, Meg had to rehearse the ceremony of handing them round, before she accomplished it to the satisfaction of her mistress, who could not proceed to her toilette till that important point was settled.

After a great deal of scolding and hurrying, by five o'clock, in all the glories of her best brocade, she was seated with a volume of Shakspeare before her ready to receive her visitors. Sally and Fanny were the first to arrive: their appearance chased the last traces of anxiety and impatience which lingered on the brow of their benevolent friend, as with great dignity she extended a hand to each.

"How beautiful you look!" exclaimed the elder of the girls, who was perfectly aware of her landlady's weak points; "what a magnificent silk! and oh, what diamonds!"

The artful little hussey knew that her earrings and brooch were only paste.

"And wax candles!" she added.

"Why yes!" said the actress, with an air of complacency; "when *I am at home*, I like to have everything handsome about me!"

"Are you not at home here?" demanded Fanny, with the utmost simplicity.

Mrs. Watkins gravely explained to her what was meant by a lady's being at home in the fashionable world.

The second-floor lodgers, Herr Weitzer, and his wife, next made their appearance. The musician was a little, spare old man, not unlike the portraits of Voltaire in appearance; his arms were of an unusual length, a peculiarity which he used to boast gave him great command over his instrument—the violin: to compensate for this excess, his legs were as remarkably short; he spoke but little English—music was the passion of his life. Although twenty years a husband, he had never known any other—the lady had married him, and he had submitted to his destiny.

The lieutenant and the young painter followed in the list of guests—the latter was a tall, graceful youth, about seventeen. His features were far from being what the world would consider handsome, yet when animated it was impossible to avoid being struck by the refinement and eloquence of their expression; the brow was large and thoughtful, shaded by chestnut-colored hair, worn rather long according to the fashion of the day, the eyes a bright blue.

Although but little accustomed to society, there was nothing awkward in the timidity with which he entered the room and paid his respects to the mistress of the house, who introduced him to the rest of the company.

"Ah! de gentlemans who paints!" exclaimed the old fiddler whose wife had some difficulty in making him comprehend that the elegant, the well-dressed young man before him and the shabby artist he had occasionally passed on the dimly-lighted, narrow staircase were the same person; "I hope mine fiddles does not make much disagreebles to you!"

"On the contrary, I admire Beethoven and Mozart too passionately," replied the painter, "ever to tire of their strains!"

The musician grasped his hand, and declared, in his broken English, "dat dare vas von symphony between dem." Doubtless he meant sympathy.

"Margaret!" said her mistress, addressing the old servant, who, dressed in her best stuff gown, with clean white muslin apron and cuffs, stood at the door, "directly ma'amselle arrives you will serve the tea!"

"Yes, ma'am, it's all ready, and the toast!"

A frown from the actress told her it was neither the time nor place for her to indulge in her usual loquacity.

The door of the little parlor opened, and Mademoiselle Josephine, of the Opera, made her appearance; she came sliding into the room with an affectation which would be considered as highly ridiculous in our days, but was reckoned supreme *ton* at the commencement of the present century. Her dress consisted of a showy gauze, cut rather lower in the neck than the old actress mentally approved, and trimmed with a profusion of various-colored ribbons.

"I knew she would not come till we were all waiting!" whispered Sally to her young companion; "So like her! It's what she calls producing a sensation—she always contrives in the ballet to be the last!"

There was the least possible tone of spite in the observation, just sufficient to prove that mademoiselle was no favorite with the speaker.

After paying her respects to the landlady, the dancer—who was a tall blonde—affected a start as she recognized Mr. Barry, who did not appear in the least degree flattered by what the French would have termed her *empressement*.

"Ah, Sally, child—you here!" exclaimed the coquette, in a tone which was intended to be patronizing, but which only betrayed disappointment.

At any other time Sally, with her usually lively manner, would most probably have retorted, but the eyes of the painter were fixed upon her, attracted no doubt by the exclamation of mademoiselle; the cheeks of the poor girl began to glow, and her eyes were filled with tears. She knew not why—never had she felt so vexed with herself.

"I am afraid," said Barry, good-naturedly, "that you will consider us children out of place here; but our hostess is too kind to omit any of her friends!"

The old actress bowed, and mademoiselle looked at him reproachfully, as if to ask whether he thought it possible she could consider him out of place in any society.

Despite her glances of admiration, the young man quietly took a seat beside Sally, whose eyes began to sparkle through her tears. She had reached that dangerous period of life which separates girlhood from womanhood: in manners, pleasures, and feelings still a child; whilst her life was as yet a dream, from which the first breath of passion might awaken her.

During the evening the wine was twice handed round, according to instructions, by Meg. Mrs. Watkins—the due amount of pressure having been applied—consented to recite a scene from the *Grecian Daughter*, which was received with unanimous approval.

At last little Fanny was requested to sing.

At the first sound of her voice, the blind lieutenant closed his sightless orbs, as if to hide the weakness of which he felt ashamed; the sound had evidently touched some long-forgotten chord of his memory, awaking once more the heart's deep music.

When she concluded he drew her towards

him, and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead.

Every one present thought his conduct exceedingly singular; the old actress could not comprehend how any one could be more affected by the singing of a child than her pathetic recitation from the *Grecian Daughter*.

Mademoiselle Josephine simpered and tossed her head disdainfully.

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed Herr Weitzer; "Whot bootiful voice—quite treasure!"

Knowing his enthusiasm for music, no one paid the least attention to what he said.

The lieutenant released Fanny from his embrace, and left the room without a word of adieu to any one.

"Strange!" said Mrs. Watkins, whose ideas of propriety were very much shocked by his abrupt departure.

"Rude!" echoed mademoiselle.

"With all due respect, ladies," said the young painter, "I think the conduct of the gentleman neither one nor the other; unless," he added, "feeling is strange, or sensibility rude!"

On a nod from her mistress, old Meg handed round the wine and cake for the third time, and the party soon afterwards broke up.

CHAPTER XXVI.

> But then her face—
> So lovely, yet so arch—so full of mirth:
> The overflowings of an innocent heart.
> ROGERS.

Mademoiselle Josephine felt exceedingly out of humor with herself and every one else, but more particularly with Sally. The idea of having been neglected for a child—for so she considered her—was galling to her vanity—of which, to speak the truth, the tall opera dancer had more than her sex's usual share. Ever since the young painter lodged in the house, she had had her eyes upon him: his person and manners pleased her, and if not over head and ears in love, she had every disposition to coquette with him.

She evinced her resentment the following night by refusing to allow Sally to accompany her home—which the poor girl had been accustomed to do by way of protection—for, young as she was, she had more than once attracted the attention of those libertines who throng the purlieus of the theatres.

The consequence was, the poor girl was obliged to return to her lodgings alone. This lasted more than a week.

One night the performance had detained her later than usual, and Sally, with her little bundle under her arm, had just reached the top of the Haymarket, when two officers in undress emerged from some tavern in the vicinity; both were flushed with wine. In those days, unfortunately, there were no police: a few aged, sleepy men, dignified by the name of watchmen, were the only guardians of the public safety.

"A Hebe, by Jupiter!" exclaimed one of the young men, seizing her rudely by the arm, and forcibly raising her face, which she attempted to conceal.

"Shares, Walter—shares!" said his companion.

"Pray let me go!" entreated the terrified girl; "I am nearly home!"

"Home!" hiccupped the first; "you shall go with me—I will provide you with a home!"

Sally struggled resolutely, but the speaker still kept his grasp upon her arm. The hour, as we observed, was late, and no one was near, except the hackney-coach-men of the neighboring stand, who thought it was no business of theirs to interfere.

"Don't be a fool!" said the well-dressed ruffian. "Can't you see that I am an officer and a gentleman? Of course I shall treat you handsomely!"

"Coach, your honor?" demanded one of the men.

"Yes—quick!"

The fellow drove up; and the one whom his companion had addressed by the name of Walter attempted to force her into the vehicle. The terrified girl, now seriously alarmed, began to scream for assistance.

"Curse your squalling!" roared the drunkard.

"All right, your honor!" said the coachman, assisting to lift her in.

Despite her cries, they had nearly accomplished their purpose, when the young painter, who was returning from a party, passed the spot: he recognized the voice, and a fury which he would have been puzzled to account for, even to himself, suddenly seized him. To dash between the door of the coach and the assailants was the work of an instant.

"Walk on!" exclaimed the coachman, raising the butt-end of his whip.

"Rascal!"

"Whelp!" roared the officer, who still retained the struggling girl in his grasp; "by what right do you interfere with gentlemen?"

At the word "gentlemen" the artist laughed bitterly.

"Save me, Mr. Barry—pray save me!"

sobbed Sally, overwhelmed with shame at such an outrage being offered to her in his presence.

The young man needed no second entreaty: with one blow he levelled the hackney-coachman with the ground, and seizing the aggressor by the collar, forced him to relinquish his grasp. The disappointed drunkard shouted to his companion, who stood laughing at a distance, highly enjoying the joke.

"Come along!" he said; "we shall find plenty in the Mall!"

"I'll have her!" roared Walter Trevanian—for the unmanly assailant of poor Sally was no other than the son of Sir Richard; "if you are afraid, you can leave me!"

He well knew that to cast an imputation upon the courage of his friend was the surest means to induce him to remain.

"You shall see how much I am afraid!" replied the young man, flushed with wine and stung by the unmerited sneer.

So saying, he advanced towards Barry, and haughtily commanded him to walk on and not interfere in an affair which did not concern him.

On the painter's refusal they came to blows. Although so young, Barry was exceedingly strong. For some time he defended himself successfully against both his assailants—who, to do them justice, took every care to avoid injuring the helpless cause of their dispute. With all his skill and courage, the defender of poor Sally must have succumbed but for the unexpected succor which arrived in the person of Meg. Her mistress, alarmed at the lateness of the hour, had sent her in search of her lodger.

As we before stated, Meg was a tall, gaunt creature, on whom time had produced the same effect that it does upon the oak—rendering her more gnarled and tough; her strength was no less remarkable than her person.

No sooner did she perceive how matters stood, than she quietly took off one of her heavy clogs, and struck Walter Trevanian a blow upon the temple. He fell without a groan.

"You have killed him!" observed his friend.

"Not unlikely!" said Meg, in the coolest tone imaginable. "I seldom have occasion to strike twice!"

"Pass on, in heaven's name!" said the young man; "he has paid dearly enough for his folly!"

With the assistance of the coachman, who had partially recovered from the blow the young painter had dealt him, the speaker placed the senseless body of his companion in the vehicle, and ordered him to drive to the barracks at Knightsbridge.

"Enough!" shouted Barry, as they drove off; "I shall know where to find you!"

"No, no!" sobbed Sally; "in heaven's name, do not think of seeking them—they would kill you!"

"Let them alone—bad men!" muttered Meg—who did not appear to think she had displayed any extraordinary heroism: "no pity for our poor weak sex!"

Neither the terrified girl nor her defender—despite the alarm of the one and the bruises of the other—could forbear a smile at the observation of the speaker, whose recent achievement rendered it doubly amusing.

"Not so weak, Meg," replied Barry, "if all are like you!"

"But all are not like me!" answered the old woman. "Thank heaven, I could always defend myself from the best of you!"

After the proof she had so recently given, he must have been incredulous indeed to have doubted it.

There is nothing more natural than that we should feel an interest in watching over the safety of those we have once protected. They seem to have acquired a right to our sympathy and assistance—at least the young artist felt it so; for, from that night, he invariably waited at the stage-door of the Opera House to conduct Sally home; but he was not her only protector—for Mrs. Watkins as regularly dispatched her faithful servant to escort her lodger.

Mademoiselle Josephine was furious: her jealousy had brought about the very result she was so anxious to avoid.

When the heart begins to prompt the lips to speak, they are wondrous eloquent: none ever plead so fervently as when urging their first passion. We have often been puzzled to account for this. Is it that the affections resemble those springs of earth from which the stone which sealed them is suddenly removed—the first gush is the freshet!

Barry and poor Sally loved—the natural consequence of their being thrown so much together. Little did Meg think, as she walked behind them night after night, what was the subject of their conversation, or understand why they generally took the longest way to St. Martin's Court. Love had never disturbed the peaceful current of her existence—she loved only her mistress.

The jealousy of mademoiselle was far more clairvoyant: she, too, had followed them at a distance night after night, her heart burning with envy and bitterness.

Matters had gone on in this way for some

time, when one morning the disappointed opera dancer descended to the little parlor, her countenance pale with passion, and insisted with so much pertinacity upon seeing Mrs. Watkins, that the old lady was compelled to receive her.

"She was sorry," she said—"very sorry—to complain, but really self-respect would not permit her to keep silence any longer! She had hitherto lived only in respectable houses, and it was really shocking—very ——"

At the words "respectable houses," the actress bridled up, and begged her with great dignity to explain herself.

The jealous woman muttered something about Mr. Barry's flirtation with a chit like Sally Carroll.

"And what would you have me do?" demanded Mrs. Watkins. "The poor child required some protection—you refused her yours!"

"No reason," replied mademoiselle, "that she should take up with his! Meg, I should think, is quite sufficient!"

"Doubtless," continued the mistress of the house, in the same polite strain, "the presence of my attendant is sufficient protection; more, it prevents any impropriety in the young gentleman escorting her home!"

"Does it prevent the impropriety of his kissing her in the streets?" exclaimed the jealous woman. "Pah! shocking!"

"Kissing her?"

"Yes—kissing her! I have seen it—Meg has seen it too!"

"Well!" said the old servant, "and what then—since we both saw it? There could be no harm in it! If he had kissed you, I'd wager a silver groat you wouldn't have called out 'murder!'"

"Silence, Meg!" interrupted her mistress, with difficulty repressing a smile—for she saw at once that her visitor was devoured by jealousy. "Really," she added, turning to her visitor, "I do not see how I can interfere—such mere children!"

"That," said mademoiselle, "is the worst part of it—so young and so corrupted! Would you believe it, that every morning he visits her in her chamber!"

"I certainly would not believe it!" replied the old lady.

"Nor I!" exclaimed Meg, with whom it was a point of faith to believe and act just as her mistress did.

"More! he is there now—I heard him! I have listened for these three mornings—and, in fact, till I can endure it no longer!"

"This must be seen to," observed the old actress, in one of her most tragic tones, 'if it be true!'

"If it be true!" almost screamed the *ever.*

"Our own eyes shall judge them!"

So saying, Mrs. Watkins opened the parlor door, and began—not without difficulty, for it was a task at her age—to ascend the staircase, followed by her visitor and Meg. When they reached the third floor, she paused for want of breath.

"I can hear them!" whispered the spy, as a low, joyous, musical laugh was heard in the chamber of poor Sally.

The mistress of the house began to look serious. Despite her good opinion of her lodger, it was possible: and yet with all her knowledge of the world, she could hardly bring her mind to think it.

With a trembling hand, she gently knocked at the door.

"Come in!" cried a cheerful voice.

The old lady gently opened it, and the mystery was explained at a glance. The young artist was there—but the purpose for which he was there was equally obvious.

Upon a canvas stretched upon his easel, he had already sketched a spirited likeness of the old lady as the Duchess of York—her favorite character—and introduced Sally and Fanny as her grandchildren, the infant princes.

It was intended as a surprise for their landlady on her birthday—hence the concealment which had been observed.

Both the girls attempted to hide the picture, exclaiming that she was not to see it till finished.

"My dear Mrs. Watkins," said the painter, rising from his seat, "I could almost have wished the pleasure of showing you my attempt postponed!"

"It's a bad world, my dear children!" answered the venerable woman, the tears standing in her eyes—for she was sensibly touched by the proof of their affection; "a bad world!"

They looked, as they really felt, puzzled to understand her.

"But come, mademoiselle!" she continued; "come and see the proof of your credulity and the poor child's innocence!"

At the word "innocence," Sally blushed deeply. She began to comprehend the cruel suspicions of her rival, who had barred herself in her own chamber, mortified at having displayed her jealousy to so little purpose.

"The vile hussey!" exclaimed the actress, her indignation increasing as she contemplated the portraits, and found that her lodger had really produced from memory a most spirited likeness; "she shall leave my house! I'll have no slanderers here! Don't you think, Mr. Barry," she added, that if I were to wear my point-lace veil it would have a very good effect!"

"Excellent!" said the young man; "but

pardon me, my dear madam—I am anxious for an explanation of something which your very just anger leads me to suspect! We have been slandered, I presume?"

"Most foully!" answered Mrs. Watkins, in a Lady Macbeth-like tone.

"Not," said the gentleman, "if you have been told that we love each other, as hearts should love—*truly, virtuously!* We are both young," he added; "have time before us—I am not without talent—we can afford to wait! Should fortune smile upon my exertions, Sally will be my wife; but, till that hour arrives, a sister—a dear, fond sister! May heaven disappoint my every hope in life, if ever a thought of wrong towards her entered my mind!"

"God bless you, my children!" said the actress; "I believe you! She is a good girl, and worthy of you!"

Mademoiselle Josephine, who had heard every word that passed, not knowing what else to do, amused herself by a very clever rehearsal of a fit of hysterics.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Across I've seen, and of no vulgar name,
Who, being from one part possessed of fame,
Whether they are to laugh, cry, whine, or bawl,
Still introduce the favorite part in all.—CHURCHILL.

From the day of the *denouement* of the picture, in which the jealousy of Mademoiselle Josephine was so signally exposed, and which ended in that lady's quitting the house, to the great delight of the rest of the lodgers, Mrs. Watkins felt an increased interest in the welfare of Sally and her little *protegee*. Their evenings, when not engaged at the theatre, were spent with her. It is almost superfluous to add, that from these cheerful reunions the young painter was not excluded. His manly declaration when discovered in the chamber of poor Sally, together with the delicate compliment of the portrait, won the heart as well as the confidence of his landlady.

It was from no doubt, therefore, either of his honor or the prudence of Sally, that the old actress exacted a promise from each that for the future their interviews should take place in her presence.

The evil surmises of the world, as she observed, often put wicked thoughts into the hearts of those who otherwise would have remained pure.

The young lovers submitted with a good grace to this restriction—which, after all, was no very great hardship, since their Mentor permitted them to walk every Sunday for several hours in the park by themselves; and four nights in the week Barry saw the object of his affection safe home from the theatre—always, be it understood, with Meg to play propriety.

The good old creature contented herself by following them at a respectful distance, and generally paused a minute or two after they had entered St. Martin's Court, to give time for the parting word—the parting kiss.

As the painter used to observe, it was extraordinary what tact she had acquired.

Fanny—whose profound awe of the rustling faded brocade, stately manners, and tawdry head-dress of the mistress of the house, had gradually given way to that feeling of confidence and affection which kindness is sure to inspire in the heart of childhood—became the pet of the whole house. As for the blind lieutenant, he was never tired of listening to her voice. To him it was as a melody of the past—a dream of his youth. Every time he heard her singing upon the stairs or in the room above—for old Weitzer insisted upon giving her lessons in music—the solitary man would gently open the door of his chamber and listen, with the tears streaming down his venerable cheeks.

In declamation the landlady undertook to instruct Fanny herself—that was a duty to be intrusted to no other hands. The task, however, proved not so easy as the old actress had imagined. Her pupil frequently startled her by some sudden burst of sensibility totally at variance with the antiquated traditions of the school in which Mrs. Watkins had been trained.

"It was not exactly bad," her instructress used to observe; "only it was so exceedingly odd!"

Genius generally does appear odd, according to the notions of those who judge it from their own point of view—which it seldom elevated above mediocrity.

But even with these defects—for such she considered them—her kind friend felt delighted with the progress of Fanny; her voice possessed those low, rich, murmuring tones which feeling and passion only breathe—tones such as Shakspeare loved,

Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman!

"She will be a great actress!" Mrs. Watkins frequently used to declare. "I shall live again in my pupil!"

"*Mein Got!* No—no! She shall be vine singer!"

Such was the reply of Herr Weitzer, who could not endure the thought of such a voice being thrown away—as he termed it, to the great indignation of the old actress—"upon *Shakspeare* and de stage."

At such times the lady would draw herself up to her full height, and remind her lodger, in a tone of freezing dignity—which, by-the-bye, was thrown away on the poor German—that Miss Fanny was her pupil, and destined for the legitimate profession.

In the magnificence of her ideas of the stage, the speaker classed the lyric drama, pantomimes, and farces in the same category. "All very well," she would say, "*after the play!*"

Covent Garden at last was about to open for the winter season, and Sally, to her great delight, was engaged at the enormous salary of one guinea per week. This was during the management of John Kemble, when his sister, Mrs. Jordan, Blanchard, Munden, and the late Mrs. Glover adorned the stage. Where, alas! are we to look for their successors?

To the warm-hearted girl the addition of six shillings a week to her income was an accession of wealth absolutely embarrassing. She felt puzzled how to dispose of it. Her first thought was of Fanny—her dreams were of new frocks, a cloak and bonnet for her *protegee;* but before deciding, she determined upon consulting Mrs. Watkins on so important an occasion.

Her landlady heard her with a benevolent smile.

"You forget," she observed, "the five guineas!"

Sally had either forgotten them, or considered that the old lady was fully entitled to them for the care she had taken of Fanny—who since the death of the signora had not earned a shilling. She said as much.

"No—no!" said the actress. "True, our state is somewhat altered, but we are not reduced to eat the orphan's bread!"

After much reflection and consultation, it was at last decided that the money should be expended in clothing the children for the winter—an outlay the more necessary, as she had long meditated a project for the advantage of her pupil.

About a week before the opening of the theatre, Mrs. Watkins directed Fanny to equip herself in her new dress, and be ready at twelve the following day to accompany her upon a visit. It was so rare an event for her to leave the house, that the announcement created quite a sensation.

Whilst Sally superintended the toilette of the orphan, Meg was no less assiduous in arranging that of her mistress, whose black lace cardinal she had *revived* the day before. It was a relic of the actress's former splendor, and only paraded on very solemn occasions.

The young painter, who had been invited to escort them, was ready to the hour, and *dressed in his very best.*

Poor Meg, to use her own words, had a toilsome work of it: such pinning, frizzing, and alteration before the old lady was fully satisfied. The faithful creature endured the petulance and caprices of her aged mistress with the most untiring good humor; and "Thank you, Margaret! that will do very nicely!" which at last rewarded her patience, was sufficient recompense.

Exactly as the clock struck twelve, Mrs. Watkins, in the full glory of her many-colored satins, lace, and furbelows, sallied into St. Martin's Court, leaning on the arm of Barry, whose quiet, gentlemanly appearance toned down the somewhat too striking dress of his companion—little Fanny, still in deep mourning, held by his disengaged hand.

As the neighbors appeared at the doors and windows of the narrow court to admire them, the actress grasped her tall, gold-headed cane more firmly, and walked with increased dignity. She felt that all eyes were upon her; she was again, as the French say, *en scene.*

"May I inquire where we are going?" demanded the gentleman, who mentally trusted that the distance would prove a short one—for, much as he respected his venerable landlady, he began to suspect there was something like ridicule attached to his position.

"To Covent Garden!" replied Mrs. Watkins, in a solemn tone.

"Market, madam?"

"No, sir—theatre!" said the lady, with a dignity which was intended to impress him with the importance of the news; "the temple of Shakspeare and the drama! It is long since I paid a visit to my former colleagues! I am about to present my pupil!"

"Fanny?"

The actress nodded in the affirmative.

"She is too young for the stage!" observed the painter.

His venerable companion explained to him that *King John* was about to be produced with extraordinary splendor. "Mrs. Siddons was to be the Constance; her brothers John and Charles the King and Faulconbridge; and the Arthur," she added, with a look of triumph, "if I have any influence left, our darling Fanny!"

This was the project which the retired actress had mediated for her *protegee*—a project in which benevolence and vanity were both combined. The engagement would be of serious advantage to the child in a pecuniary point of view, and, as her pupil, a source of intense gratification to herself.

With far less annoyance than the painter expected, the party passed through Covent

Garden. The basket women scarcely knew whether to laugh or curtsey at the stately vision which sailed majestically past them. Fortunately, before they had time to decide, it had disappeared from their gaze.

In Bow Street—where there is always a crowd of idlers hanging round the police offices and the theatre—matters at one time began to look threatening. Several rather equivocal expressions by the would-be wits of the day were made. One uttered an observation rather loudly about the Queen of Sheba taking an airing: whilst another, quoting Scripture, declared, "That Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

At last, to his infinite relief, they reached the stage door.

"Whom do you want, ma'am?" inquired the doorkeeper.

"I am going to the green room!" answered Mrs. Watkins, with great dignity.

"Can't pass, ma'am—orders most strict!"

"My name is Watkins, man!" exclaimed the lady.

"Dare say it is, ma'am, but it's not on the list! Don't know you!"

"Don't know you!" And yet five years previously she had been in the habit of passing him daily—for nearly forty years had been a member of the company. The words fell with a dull, earth-like sound upon the ears of the once popular actress. Forgotten—forgotten, even by the stage door-keeper. Perhaps she mentally asked herself if the public had a better memory.

At this instant the manager arrived: he was then in the very zenith of his popularity—courted by royalty—the very glass of fashion—and, let us add, in its best form—that of a perfect gentleman.

Well does the author recollect the magnificent John Kemble, who came on a visit to his father's house when he—the writer—was a mere child. The actor used to take him upon his knee and make him recite the soliloquy from Cato.

How the world has changed since then. Dreams have become realities—hopes ashes—and —— Pshaw! digressing again!

The Thespian monarch recognised the old actress in an instant, and gracefully extended his hand.

The door-keeper felt that the old lady was some one whom he ought to have remembered, and drew back from the entrance.

"What brings you to court, fair lady?" demanded the manager, "where for these long years past we lacked your gracious presence?"

"A boon, my lord!" replied the actress, in the same theatrical tone.

"*Speak! I am bound to hear!*"

"So art thou to *grant*, when thou shalt hear!" answered Mrs. Watkins, playfully changing the text of Shakspeare to suit her purpose.

John Kemble gave the old lady his arm to conduct her to the green-room—Barry and Fanny following, as a matter of course—the Cerberus at the door was muzzled.

To the young painter, the introduction to the green-room of Covent Garden was more than an event—it was a study. The mortification and apprehension he had so lately endured were amply recompensed.

In a chair which had figured the preceding night as the throne of the guilty Thane, was seated Mrs. Siddons, waiting the commencement of the rehearsal. Her person already had begun to assume that matron outline which rendered her the dignified representative of Volumnia and Constance. She was beautiful still—not with the freshness of youth, but life's maturer graces.

Time, as if loth to touch perfection, even to the last laid his hand most leniently upon her.

Her brother Charles was leaning over her chair, endeavoring to dissipate her ill-humor at the non-arrival of John, whose absence delayed the rehearsal.

Blanchard, Bannister, and Egerton—Silver-toned Egerton, as he was called—were listening to a capital story, which Fawcett, the stage manager, was relating about Mrs. Jordan and the Duke of Clarence.

The witty actress, in reply to a letter in which her royal lover informed her that the king thought the allowance he made her—£600 a-year—too much, tore off the bottom of a play-bill, and sent it him.

At that time, after the prices to the various parts of the theatre, the following line appeared on the bills of the day:

"No money returned after the rise of the curtain."

Besides those I have named, there were many literary loungers of the day who had *their entree* into the green-room—no mean privilege in those days—and several of the company—it being Saturday or treasury day.

The appearance of John Kemble, with their former comrade on his arm, was welcomed by a burst of pleasure. Even the august brows of Mrs. Siddons unbent. The old lady had been a general favorite. The position she had held in her profession had been too distinguished to be forgotten, and yet not sufficiently brilliant to excite envy or jealousy.

"It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!" exclaimed Blanchard, with a start, at the same time giving an excellent imitation of the manager.

"Oh, Romeo—Romeo! wherefore art

thou Romeo?" replied Mrs. Watkins, answering him from the same play.

The joke told—for Blanchard played only the old men, in which line he was inimitable.

Munden entered the green-room, looking exceedingly discontented. He had just received his salary, and the treasurer had given him a light guinea.

"Hast thou forgotten Jaffier!" said Fawcett, pointing to his old acquaintance.

"My grief was blind! I did not see your grace!" muttered the penurious actor, at the same time dropping the coin into his purse; "I did not see your grace! Most humbly on my knee I crave your blessing!"

We need scarcely remind our readers that this is one of Richard the Third's speeches to his mother, the Duchess of York.

"Thou hast it!" said the old actress, taking up the cue: she hesitated—the words which followed appeared like a satire.

"*May thy charitable heart and mind,*" whispered Blanchard, prompting her, "love one another!"

The laugh was general—Even Munden joined in it. Actors were merry creatures in those days, when quips and quirks passed harmless.

To the young painter all this was delightful. "What an admirable picture it would make!" he thought—and the thought was not destined to remain barren.

It was not till the close of the rehearsal that Mrs. Wilkins found occasion to solicit the manager that he would give Fanny a trial in the part of Prince Arthur—the request was an ambitious one.

"She is my pupil!" added the pleader.

John Kemble "hum'd and ha'd," and referred her to Mrs. Siddons, who very graciously consented to hear the child rehearse the part in her own dressing room—her brothers and Barry forming the audience.

"Don't be alarmed, my love!" said the old actress, encouragingly; "we are all friends! Now begin the first speech!"

Her *protegee* commenced:

"*Heaven shall forgive you Cœur de Lion's death!*"

"Hand to heaven!" whispered her instructress.

"*The rather that you give his offspring life—*

"*Shadowing their rights under your wing of war.*"

"Arms extended."

"*I give you welcome with a powerless hand——*"

"*Hold it out!*"

"*But with a heart full of unstained love.*"

"*Hand to heart.*"

"*Welcome before the gates of Anjou's duke!*"

"Shake hands with Austria."

This was the last interruption poor Fanny was subjected to by her benevolent friend—who looked upon the rules of the *ricoco* school of acting, in which she had been a professor, as upon the laws of the Medes and Persians—things which alter not.

"Don't confuse her!" whispered Charles Kemble, good-naturedly; "you can correct her action by-and-bye!"

The rest of the scene was rehearsed to the satisfaction of both the manager and—what was of still greater importance—of his sister—who expressed herself perfectly willing to accept Fanny as the Arthur of the play.

The point was gained, and the triumph of the benevolent old lady complete. Her pupil was engaged at the nightly salary of five shillings during the run of the piece.

On leaving the theatre fortunately it rained; we say fortunately, for it gave Barry an excuse for sending for a hackney-coach, and so avoiding the ridicule of once more parading through the streets with his venerable but eccentric-looking friend.

During the rehearsals, which lasted a month—they did not produce a play of Shakspeare's in a week in those days—it was with the utmost difficulty that Mrs. Watkins could be prevented from accompanying Fanny every day to the theatre. Under the plea that her health would suffer from the exertion, Sally and her lover at last persuaded her to intrust her pupil to their care. The future actress and the painter alike profited by it. It released the child from the restraint which the whispered instructions of Mrs. Watkins would have imposed, and enabled the latter to complete his studies for the picture, the first idea of which had been suggested by his visit to the green-room.

The night—the important night—at last arrived: *King John*, with new dresses, scenery, and decorations, was to be given to the public. Barry, it was arranged, should escort his landlady—who had the *entree* as a matter of right, after so many years' services, to the boxes. Meg and Madame Weitzer were to go to the pit; as for the old musician, he positively refused to be present: his indignation at *his* pupil—as he persisted in calling Fanny—being sacrificed to *Shabspeare*—as he invariably pronounced the name of the immortal bard—was too great.

"Mein Got—mein Got!" he exclaimed; "mit such fine voice for de Opera!"

It is not to be supposed that the talents of a child, however great, could obtain much

notice, contrasted with the genius of such masters of their art as John Kemble and his sister; still in the earlier parts of the play there were murmurs of applause, which became more energetic in the scene with Hubert.

Mrs. Watkins was in ecstacies.

"I taught her!" she frequently observed to her companion, jealous lest her share in the triumph of her pupil should be forgotten.

In the fourth act, where Arthur leaps from the tower and is killed, the audience were excited to the highest pitch by what they supposed the extraordinary acting of Fanny. No sooner had she raised herself on one arm, after the fall, than her features became violently agitated; her eyes rolled with an expression of intense agony. With apparent difficulty—such as might be expected in the death struggle of the martyred child—she uttered the lines:

Ah, me! my uncle's spirit's in these stones!
Heaven take my soul and England keep my bones.

Her gaze suddenly fell, and she sank upon the stage so naturally that a round of applause followed.

"Beautiful!" muttered Barry.

The old actress made no reply. She had *not taught her that*—it was against all her ideas of acting.

But was it acting? No! Fanny had recognised in the first row of the pit the eyes of her old enemy, Miles, glaring like those of a famished wolf ready to seize its prey, fixed upon her: hence her look of agony, her broken voice, and the real, not affected, insensibility that followed.

When the actor who at the conclusion of the scene had to raise her in his arms and bear her off, lifted her from the ground, he found to his surprise that she was cold and senseless. A surgeon had to be sent for.

"How fortunate," thought the prompter, "that she had finished her part!"

A nervous fever ensued; it was weeks before the little sufferer was pronounced out of danger, during which time old Meg frequently observed a suspicious, rough-looking fellow lingering in the court. Once he ventured to ask her if any one was ill, and tried to draw her into conversation—but Meg had no time to waste, and repelled his advances with more than her usual gruffness.

"*Shabspeare* shall not have her!" exclaimed the German musician, with a chuckle, the first time he heard the sound of her voice after her recovery; "I vil make her great singer yet!"

During Fanny's illness, the curiosity of those who watched over her was greatly excited by her ravings. Frequently, in the most piteous accents, she implored them *not to let Miles come* near her; at other times she would hold her arms out as if they were tied, and ask only to be permitted to say her prayers.

Neither Mrs. Watkins, Sally, Barry, nor Meg could make it out.

The latter, who happened to be present when the sufferer was sufficiently strong to relate her fearful recollections of the scene when the harlequin rescued her from her intended murderer, suddenly remembered the man in the court, and could not avoid exclaiming, as she clenched her not very delicate fist.

"Only let me catch him *again!*"

"Again!" repeated Fanny, turning white with terror; "have you, too, seen him?"

Barry made the old woman a sign to be cautious.

"Didn't you say he was in the pit?" replied Meg, with great presence of mind; "on the front row—near to me and the German up-stairs? We both saw him, with his ugly eyes fixed upon you as if he could devour you! But don't be afraid, darling!" she added; "if ever I see him again, I promise you faithfully I'll strangle him!"

All present smiled at the quiet energy with which Meg expressed her not very feminine resolution. In reality it was no laughing matter—for, with her extraordinary strength and devotion to those whom she loved, she was as likely as not to keep her word.

The young painter resolved to question her yet more closely upon the subject in private. For several weeks after hearing her description of the man, he kept a close look out. But Miles, if it was Miles, no longer ventured into the court.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Let them anatomise her—see what breeds about her heart.
Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts. SHAKSPEARE.

MARTHA QUIN—or rather Miss Mendez—for the royal licence had been obtained authorising her to assume the name of her mother's family—unlike most persons suddenly enriched, did not sit down contented to enjoy the good things of this world, and leave her mind uncultivated. On the contrary, she determined to repair the culpable neglect of her grandfather, and educate herself. With this view she requested Mr. Foster to procure her some lady-like, accomplished person, who could act in the double capacity of governess and compa-

nion; for the hours at times hung heavily upon the hands of the desolate heiress, with no other occupation than her own sad thoughts and the bitter recollections of the past.

The person whom Mr. Foster selected for this delicate task was the orphan daughter of a barrister, whom he had known and esteemed, but whose professional success had but ill responded to his varied learning and merits. He had died poor, leaving his only child to the protection—we might almost add, to the charity—of his friends.

Harriet Wyndham had a mind gifted like her father's, with a singular aptitude for study. Although only eighteen years of age, she was an accomplished linguist, a profound musician, and possessed more than a superficial knowledge of the natural sciences—to say nothing of those lighter branches of female education which adorn the saloon and the boudoir. Had her heart but responded to her intellect, she would have been one of creation's fairest master-pieces.

Although not regularly beautiful, her features were expressive and pleasing—her figure graceful and commanding.

In selecting her for the instructress and companion of his client, Mr. Foster had been influenced by two considerations. First, the necessity of his *protegee* doing something to release her from the galling chain of dependence; secondly, the desire of placing near to Martha a person of her own sex whom she might love and confide in. He was a philosopher as well as a lawyer, and he quickly perceived that the morbid feelings of the heiress, her solitary life, and disappointment were preying upon her health.

In explaining to Harriet Wyndham his views, the kind-hearted man unintentionally pointed out to her a field for the exercise of her speculative talents—to worm herself into the affection and confidence of a being whom the world had deprived of all natural ties and affections, and then, as if in mockery, suddenly made rich. Rich! Fine recompense—a pall of cloth of gold thrown over a pauper's coffin—an artificial flower placed in a vase of water.

"You will find her reserved at first!" said Mr. Foster; "perhaps cold—but not unkind! Her strangeness of manner does not rise from pride, but ignorance of the world!"

The young lady eagerly noted every word he uttered.

"Perhaps she has greatly suffered?" she observed.

"She was suffered!" replied the lawyer, *with a smile—for he saw that the speaker aimed at a confidence it was not in his power to give; "but even I am ignorant of the* cause—or at least but partially acquainted with it!"

"I soon shall be no stranger to them?" mentally exclaimed the future companion of Martha.

"She is kind," continued the speaker, "and naturally shrewd—but uninformed! Time only," he added, "will win her confidence!"

In giving her these instructions, Mr. Foster had not the slightest idea that he was doing more than indicating to her the line of conduct it was advisable for her to pursue, to perform her duties conscientiously and honorably. Little did he suspect that the very speculative young lady had already settled in her own mind two important points.

The first was, to obtain the secret of Martha, if she had one.

The second was to be her heiress.

Wealth! In nine cases out of ten there is a curse accompanies it; more especially when its unfortunate possessors have been deprived by accident of those natural ties and affections which warm and sustain the heart. There is something dreadful in seeing those whom they might love, calculate every word and look—to read interest—self-interest—in every expression of kindness—to feel at last the miserable conviction forced upon them, that they are objects of speculation—not affection.

Strong minds revolt, and disappoint the sordid expectations of the human leeches who would prey upon them; weak ones yield to influences they despise, but have not the courage to resist.

On arriving at Brierly Grange, Harriet Wyndham felt quite confident of succeeding in the task she had undertaken. She had not been an inmate of her new residence more than a week before her self-reliance was somewhat shaken.

Miss Mendez was not exactly the kind of person she expected to find her—her reserve appeared impenetrable. A week! and she had not yet discovered one weak point in her character—or, what was of far more consequence, made the least approach to her confidence.

Still she did not despair: each night, as she retired to her chamber, she murmured to herself:

"The task is more worthy of me than I thought!"

And she arranged her mental powers for the struggle.

She had prepared in her own mind a system of instruction by which she thought to spare her pupil all the humiliation consequent upon a neglected education. The straightforwardness of Martha rendered her plans useless.

"You will find me very ignorant!" she said; "except reading and writing, I have everything to learn!"

Her instructress regarded her with surprise. The total absence of *amour propre* puzzled her.

"In your lessons," continued the speaker, "you must consider me as a child, and treat me as such!"

"Oh, Miss Mendez! impossible!" exclaimed the young lady, with affected interest.

"It is the only way to succeed with me!" continued the former, coolly; "fortunately I am aware of my deficiencies! It is not the varnish which hides the defects of the picture I require—but the picture itself! I would rather remain ignorant than become superficial!"

The good sense of the neglected woman triumphed over the politeness of the politic governess: she commenced with the elements of education—the surest way to arrive at the results. In six months her progress was so rapid that the lessons ceased to be uninteresting to her teacher. Nature had endowed her with an exquisite ear for music and a voice which, had it been earlier cultivated, would have proved of uncommon beauty and flexibility; her manners and language gradually grew more refined, and few would have recognised in the eloquent but reserved Martha Mendez, the granddaughter of Peter Quin.

Harriet Wyndham had frequently observed, even in some of the most interesting portions of her lessons, that the attention of her pupil would suddenly flag. She appeared absorbed, and her eyes filled with tears. Evidently her mind at such moments was occupied by some engrossing thought.

"Was it sensibility, remorse or regret?" she repeatedly asked herself.

This was a mystery she determined to fathom—the key to the confidence she so ardently desired to obtain. Martha's reserve had picqued her pride: she determined to vanquish it.

"I wonder," she observed, one day, as they were walking in the picture gallery, "that, with your wealth, you should prefer the country! True, it has its beauties: but it is not without its *ennuis!*"

"I may not always reside here!" was the reply.

"Then you receive so few visitors!"

"Do you find it dull?" inquired Martha.

The young lady hastened to assure her that the observations had not been made on her own account; and so the conversation dropped.

There are certain persons in the world with whom, after years of daily intercourse, we can never sympathise, however we may respect them; others to whom our hearts expand almost at the first meeting. The former was the case with Martha and her governess. The wealthy tenant of Brierly Grange had no particular reason to be upon her guard against or to suspect the motives of her companion—yet she never felt the least approach to confidence with her. She admired her for her talents and accomplishments, but it was admiration without affection.

At times the speculative young lady felt disposed to abandon her hopes in despair, when some elegant present or act of unexpected munificence on the part of the heiress would suddenly revive them.

Seven months had passed in this manner, when one morning a visitor was announced from London; it proved to be Clement Foster, the son of the lawyer. Martha, who had not seen him for nearly a year, scarcely recognized him—he had grown so tall and manly. Not so Harriet Wyndham; the deep blush which, despite her habit of self-control, mantled her features, proved that she had not forgotten him.

The young gentleman was the bearer of a letter for Miss Mendez, inclosed in one from his father. No sooner had the lady glanced over the contents of the lawyer's epistle, than she rose hastily and left the room.

"Nothing affecting her property, I hope?" said the governess.

"No fear of that!" replied the youth; "it was only yesterday that I heard Griffiths say she was the richest client the governor had!"

"She must be very rich indeed, then!"

"Very!" said Clement; "for my part, I wish she had ten times more—for she makes a noble use of it!"

"How did Miss Mendez become so extremely wealthy?" inquired the young lady, in a tone calculated to convey that she attached very little importance to the answer.

"Inherited it!"

"From whom?"

"Partly from her grandfather, partly from her mother's family!" answered the messenger; "but never mind her or her fortune now! Tell me, Harriet," he added, taking her hand—for he had long been accustomed to look upon her as a sister—"how do you like the country? When shall we see you in London? I have a hundred things to ask, and you do nothing but question me about Martha Quin and her fortune!"

"Martha Quin?" repeated Harriet, with surprise.

"Yes—that was her name, till the crown gave her permission to change it!"

"But why change it?" asked the young lady, perseveringly.

"Has she never told you?"

"No!"

"Then I am sure I can't!" said the young gentleman, with a good-humored laugh; "all I know is, that she is as rich as the Queen of Sheba, and that the governor highly respects her!"

With the intuitive delicacy of a generous mind, he resolved not to gratify the curiosity of the governess by relating the circumstances under which he had first become acquainted with his father's wealthy client.

"I fear," said Martha, as she re-entered the drawing-room and extended her hand to her visitor, "that you will think me a most inattentive hostess; but the intelligence you brought has excited me!"

"Agreeably, I hope?" observed the governess.

"Oh, yes!" continued the lady, with a vivacity which she rarely displayed.

"Another inheritance!" thought Miss Wyndham, with a sigh of envy.

"Your father tells me," resumed Martha, that you have a visit of importance to make a gentleman in the neighborhood—the Rev. William Rede!"

"Merely some deeds to deliver and take his receipt for them!" interrupted Clement.

"In that case," replied the tenant of Brierly Grange, "you will return and pass a day or two with me here; that is," she added, with a smile, "if you can find amusement in a place which has so little to attract!"

"So little!" repeated the youth; "why you have the finest shooting in the county! As I drove through the park I started covey after covey, to say nothing," he added, recollecting that his speech had more frankness than gallantry in it, "of the advantage of such society!"

"And I," exclaimed Martha in a tone of self-reproach, "never to have thought that I possessed the means of affording you that pleasure! You to whom I owe so much—who served me at the most critical moment of my life!"

Miss Wyndham mentally resolved to ascertain what that important service was.

"Remain," continued the speaker, "as long as you can find the least amusement; return when you will—bring your young friends with you—I shall be only too happy to receive you!"

Had the speaker been ten or twelve years younger, the governess would have felt a pang of jealousy—for "Clem," as his father called him, had made an impression upon *her heart: they had been* thrown much *together in childhood, and she* was but three *years his senior.*

The youth was profuse in his thanks—as what youth fond of sporting would not have been at such an offer? Could he have foreseen it, there is no knowing what extravagance in the way of dogs and guns he might not have committed before leaving London. Directly after lunch he rode over to the Rev. William Rede's, delivered the deeds, took the necessary receipts, and returned to the Grange in time for dinner.

Although Martha was the least observant person in the world in such particulars, she could not avoid noticing that her companion had dressed himself with unusual care. During the evening she announced her departure the following day for London.

Clement, with a self-denial which said more for his politeness than sincerity, offered to accompany her, and was rewarded by a refusal.

The governess, as a matter of course, placed herself at the disposition of her pupil.

"No—no!" exclaimed the lady of the Grange, good-humoredly; "if I cannot do the honors of my house to my guest in person, I can at least leave a graceful substitute! Consider yourself the mistress here till my return. I need no companion—my hopes will keep me company!"

At an early hour the following morning the speaker started on her journey.

"Clem," said Miss Wyndham, as she did the honors of the breakfast-table, an hour or two later, "I don't think you at all improved in your manners, whatever you may be in appearance!"

The youth looked up and smiled.

"You have been dawdling about that nasty gun this last half-hour, and scarcely replied to any one of my questions!"

"Because you ask such odd ones!" replied the embryo Nimrod. "What do I know of Miss Mendez's past life—whether she has met with a disappointment in love, or not? I don't know much about love," he added; "but as for disappointments, they come early enough, if I may judge from myself!"

"Have you experienced one?" inquired the lady, in a tone of interest.

"I should think I have; the governor has set his heart on making me a lawyer—and mine is equally made up to be a soldier!"

"Of course you intend to carry your point?"

"That depends!" said the youth; "musn't contradict the governor too far—he has only me, you know!"

"True!" observed Harriet; "and he is very rich!"

Clement Foster, who was still busily engaged in screwing on the lock of his gun, a second time raised his head from his employment and looked her full in the face—

but this time it was without a smile upon his countenance.

"What has that to do with it!" he demanded.

"Nothing!" answered the governess; "or merely that, being so rich, he could well afford to leave you the choice of a profession!"

"It's not the money," said the youth, apparently without noticing the discrepancy between her observation and explanation; "it is that he is fond of the law; it has been followed in the family from father to son for four generations—he looks upon it as a sort of nobility. Unfortunately I can see nothing in it but musty deeds and parchments—a dull office in the temple—a horse-in-the-mill sort of life that is not very tempting!"

"Clement!" exclaimed the young lady, who felt the occasion of confirming the affection of their childhood by some explicit declaration was too precious to be lost, "to me, as well as to yourself, this is a day of liberty: we can walk, ride, amuse ourselves as we please!"

"And the partridges?" observed the youth, gravely.

Harriet pouted and stamped her little foot with impatience—our female readers doubtless think that she had reason. It was rather too much that the birds should prove a greater attraction than her society; but let it be remembered that the culprit was only sixteen.

"I thought," she said, "that you loved me?"

"And so I do!" replied Clem. "Haven't we always been *like brother and sister?*"

A shade passed over the features of the governess. The words "brother and sister" had broken another of her illusions.

"Go!" she added, in a low voice; "go and look after your partridges!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

There is a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all.

SHAKESPEARE.

MILES had recognised little Fanny on the night of her appearance at Covent Garden, and had little doubt that the innocent victim of his cruelty had been equally aware of his presence. The discovery at once delighted and embarrassed him. On one hand there was the prospect of a large reward from Martha, in the event of his restoring her adopted child; on the other, the danger of being punished for the dastardly attempt he had made upon her life. Fortunately the illness of the child gave him time to reflect, and lay his plans accordingly.

Although he ceased to haunt St. Martin's Court himself, he contrived, either by the agency of Bet, or of friends whom he employed, to have a pretty shrewd idea of what was passing in the locality. When he heard that Fanny was sufficiently recovered to leave the house with Sally and Barry, who were the constant guardians and companions of her walks, he rubbed his hands with an air of quiet satisfaction; but when assured that she went nightly to the Opera House—where, by the kind influence of Madame Garrachi, she was re-engaged—his joy manifested itself in a positive grin of delight. In imagination he already counted the large sum which Martha had promised him in the event of success.

He had well matured his plans, and prepared to carry them into execution. His first care was to write the letter which caused the sudden departure of Martha from the Grange.

"Well!" said the lady, in an anxious tone, as Miles entered the private office of Mr. Foster on the day appointed for their interview, "have you any intelligence of the captain?"

"She thinks more of him than the child!" mentally observed the ruffian.

"No, miss!" he replied. "My *'pinion* is, he has left the country! It's unbeknown what pains I have taken to hunt him out—but all of no use: not one of his old pals but has lost the trail."

Martha felt satisfied of the truthfulness of his response. She had her own reasons for believing that he was right in his conjecture, and had merely put the question in order to test his veracity.

"Why have you written to me," she demanded, "if you have nothing but disappointment to communicate?"

Miles gave a knowing wink.

"Speak, man!" she added, impatiently. "Do not trifle with me!"

"I ain't a-goin!" replied the fellow, in an apologetic tone—for even he felt how much the difference between them had increased since he saw her last. She was then rude and uninformed—almost as ignorant as himself; she now appeared an elegant, self-possessed woman of the world.

"If I've missed the captain," he added, "I've caught sight of the young un!"

The affectionate creature could scarcely conceal her joy. The prospect of once more clasping her adopted child—the only being she loved on earth—in her arms,

caused her heart to beat with the most blissful emotion.

"Where is she?" faltered Martha. "Oh, where is she?"

"Can't exactly say, miss," answered Miles; "because I don't exactly know myself! But I knows some one who does, and he has promised to bring her back, *pervided*——"

"Not a shilling—not a penny," interrupted Martha, "till I see her!"

"He don't ask it, Martha—that is, miss."

"What does he require, then?"

"Three hundred pounds the instant he brings her back, and no questions asked. He is one of those curious sort of critturs," he added, "as does not like to be questioned!"

"Willingly!" exclaimed Martha; "willingly!"

The fellow bitterly regretted, when he found how readily the pecuniary part of his demand was complied with, that he had not asked for more.

"Three hundred pounds!" he slowly repeated. "I think I said three! Of course that is without any expenses," he added; "which are rather considerable!"

"They shall be paid!"

"Look you!" said the ruffian, in a firmer tone than he had hitherto ventured to employ in his answers with the grand-daughter of Peter Quin, "money is all very well; but money without safety is good for very little! I could'nt sleep on a pillow of bank notes, even if they were all my own, and know that there was a halter dangling over my head: so you must promise me—nay, for that matter, take an oath—never to employ any knowledge you may have obtained of by-gones against me! You know what I mean!"

Martha shuddered—she guessed too well.

"After all," observed Miles, "he was your grandfather; and you couldn't hang me without bringing shame upon his name and your own!"

In her anxiety to recover Fanny, the affectionate woman took the oath he proposed, although her heart recoiled at the fearful imprecations it invoked upon her head should she ever break it.

"When am I to embrace my child?" she demanded as she slowly rose from her knees.

"Perhaps to-night!" replied the man; "perhaps to-morrow! She is of great use, I suspect, to those who have got hold on her—they won't like to part with her!"

Again his employer urged him to be as expeditious as possible, at the same time *reminding him that the* oath she had taken *was only contingent upon his* fulfilling his *promise.*

"I can't make occasions," he said: "I can only profit by 'em! I am as anxious to get rid of the affair as you can be! Where am I to bring her to?"

Martha gave the address of Mr. Foster's private residence: for many reasons she did not choose to let him know her own.

"Still suspicious of me!" he muttered; "but I can trust you, if you can't me! Be ready with the money when I arrive: no matter whether it be night or day, the fellow I spoke of will expect it counted down; and, above all, remember your oath to me!"

With a confident air he left the office, satisfied that he had taken every precaution necessary not only to obtain the reward, but to shield himself from the consequences of Fanny's recollection of the attempt upon her life, which, from her agony on recognising him, he could not doubt.

"No bad day's work!" he muttered, as he quitted the Inner Temple. "I have made the bargain all right; now, then, to consider the means of carrying it out!"

With a self-control very unusual with the speaker, he returned home to mature his plans without dropping into a single public-house on his way.

The same night, Barry, as usual, was waiting near the stage-door of the King's Theatre to escort Sally and Fanny home. The young man was lost in thought; probably some sunny dream of the future possessed him—for a tall, rakish-looking personage, about his own age, had twice pronounced his name before he started from his reverie.

"What! Lee Strange!" exclaimed the painter, shaking him by the hand.

"I began to think you had forgotten me," replied the gentleman, with a smile, "since you have become a great personage! Oh, never look so modest! Petersgill declares your last picture a triumph, and predicts the most brilliant success for you at the approaching exhibition; and painters, like poets, you know, are never flatterers of each other's works! By-the-bye, you must let me see it!"

"Willingly!" said the artist; "but what are you doing at such an hour? At the old work, I suppose—dissipation—dissipation! With your talents, too!"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Lee Strange; "suppose I retort, and demand what brings you here? But I am too generous: life is a game in which the trump cards are emotions—adventures! Scarcely an incident one meets with in the busy streets of London but might serve as a theme for an epic or a burlesque! Look at that old man!" he added, pointing to a beggar near them; "what a head—the grey beard—the deep-sunken eye! On canvas it would figure in

the gallery of some nobleman—be admired—estimated at heaven knows what fabulous sum! On the shoulders of its possessor," he continued, with a certain degree of bitterness, "it scarcely attracts a second glance, unless from dreamers like ourselves!"

"You are philosophising to-night!" observed Barry, with a shrug.

"And why should I not," continued his friend, "if such is my humor? I tell you that in my walk from the top of the Haymarket to this spot I have encountered food for a month's meditation! You remember Dick Careless, and Jane, the girl whom he seduced and abandoned?"

"Perfectly."

"I passed them both!" continued the speaker; "he was in Lady Mary's chariot, whispering flattering lies into the ears of a woman old enough to be his mother—and her ladyship appeared to believe him!"

"But Jane?" said the painter, who, knowing the sad story of the poor girl, began to feel interested.

"Oh, she was on foot," replied Lee Strange, "dressed in the tawdy relics of her former finery! I saw her laughing with two simpletons from the country, who doubtless took her for a person of quality. At the sight of Dick she staggered and would have fallen, had not one of the rustics caught her in his arms!"

"And Dick?"

"Passed on; the poor girl had spent her little fortune—more—had toiled to support him. A richer dupe presented herself, and the rest is soon told."

"Material for an epic, indeed!" exclaimed Barry, with a sigh; "but I cannot see the burlesque!"

"Oh, the burlesque has not been wanting!" continued the narrator. "Would you believe it, I heard a low, ruffianly-looking fellow offer a hackney coachman five guineas for permission to drive his vehicle for as many hours? The fool had doubtless succeeded to an inheritance, and the time appeared long till he had squandered it!"

"Are you sure that was his motive?"

"What else could it be?"

"Some act of rascality," observed the painter, "which may end either in a broken head or a broken heart—I trust to heaven the former!"

"If you are curious," whispered his friend, "you may see how it will end—for, by Jupiter, here is the very fellow!"

As he spoke, a hackney-coach, driven by a sturdy looking man, whose features were concealed in a large shawl, wrapped loosely round his neck, drove up to the colonnade, a few yards beyond the stage-door. No sooner had he taken his position, than an active fellow, who had been lounging near, opened the door of the vehicle, without, however, letting down the steps.

"All right!" said the coachman, who did not attempt to quit his box.

"Just in time!" replied his confederate; "they are on the move!"

The two young men exchanged glances.

"I think," said Lee Strange, grasping his cane, "that one of your predictions is likely to be accomplished!"

"Which?"

"The one touching the fellow's head! He has nothing else sensitive about him!"

Most of the audience had quitted the theatre, but the colonnade was still thronged with idlers of both sexes, many of whom did not know where to procure either a supper or shelter for the night. So anxious was Barry to observe the end of the adventure, that he forgot for an instant Sally and her young charge.

The stage-door opened, and Fanny came bounding forth, fully expecting to find herself, as usual, caught in the arms of her protector: instead of which, a shawl was thrown rapidly over her head, and she was hurried away by some rude hand, which seized her. Despite her terror, she shrieked out the name of the painter, who rushed to the door, where Meg and Sally were waiting for him.

"The child!" he exclaimed.

"Is she not with you!"

"An instant!" he exclaimed, in a tone of distraction. "Don't stir till I return, for heaven's sake!"

Just as he reached the spot where he had lately been standing, the hackney coach drove off at a rapid pace. Heedless of his danger, he followed—for in those days, when the protection of the streets was confided to a few decrepid watchmen, it was no prudent undertaking to pursue on foot, amid the bustle and confusion of an Opera night, a vehicle driven furiously. As it turned down Parliament Street, the painter succeeded, though almost out of breath with his exertions, in jumping up behind.

"That you, Mat?" inquired the coachman.

The painter made no reply.

"Don't play the fool—this ain't no time for larking!"

"All right!" muttered Barry, imitating as well as he could the style and tone of the speaker.

The fellow drove on, pretending to be satisfied that it was one of his confederates that had taken up the place on the foot-board behind; instead of which, he was silently winding the lash of his heavy whip round his hand, so as to give additional force to the blow he meditated.

Just as they reached Whitehall, he raised himself up, and struck at the young painter, who fortunately avoided the stroke. Before he could aim a second—which in all probability must have been successful—a second person had mounted behind the coach.

"Strike away, old fellow!" exclaimed the new comer, interposing a heavy cane; "it's a long time since I had a bout at single stick! Rap for rap—all fair!"

To his inexpressible relief, Barry recognised the voice of Lee Strange.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" demanded the driver, in a surly tone.

"Can't you see?" said the latter, in a mocking tone; "we want to ride!"

"But I am not going far!"

"All the better—it will sooner be over!"

"Ruffian!" said Barry; "whom have you inside?"

"A gentleman and lady!"

"It is false!" replied the painter. "It is a child whom you have carried off from her friends—whom, if I err not, you have already tried to murder; but heaven, which once interposed between you and your fiend-like purpose, will defeat it now! Villain!" he added; "its eye and hand are upon you!"

By way of reply, the driver commenced lashing his horses, which started at a furious rate towards Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER XXX.

He sees that, let deceit work what it can—
Plot and contrive base ways to high desires—
That the all-guiding Providence doth yet
All disappoint and mocks this smoke of wit.
S. DANIEL.

MILES—for the driver of the hackney-coach was no other than poor Fanny's former persecutor—continued to urge his horses to their utmost speed, trusting to the chapter of accidents to rid himself of Barry and his friend, who, despite the desperate rate at which they were being whirled along, continued to cling most pertinaciously to the back of the old-fashioned, lumbering vehicle, which creaked and groaned whilst jolting over the stones in Parliament Street, as if it had the rheumatism in every one of its crazy springs and joints. The straps by which they held on, fortunately for the young men, were the only things not rotten about it.

"Curse them!" muttered Miles—meaning the straps—not the gentlemen—"why don't they break? But it is always my luck! Down on it again!"

Despite the wish thus energetically expressed, the straps did not choose to break, and the coach continued its way till it arrived opposite the entrance of the old House of Lords, where numerous carriages were waiting till their noble owners had done twaddling for the good of the country and the patience of the tired reporters in the gallery.

The footmen—time out of mind a gregarious race of beings—were standing in knots, discussing the politics of the day, on the outside of the House, with as much earnestness and probably as much sense as their masters in the inside; whilst their fellow-servants, the coachmen—who, from their elevated position in life, were naturally of a more philosophic turn of mind—sat most of them slumbering on their boxes—pictures of lazy, fat, sublime content.

The conversation of the politicians in livery was interrupted by the approach of the hackney-coach, which at a distance had all the appearance of a private carriage with two footmen behind.

"One of the ministers!" observed the noisiest of the speakers—a gentleman radiant in crimson plush, green, and gold.

"More likely a royal duke!" said a second.

"Room!" cried a third, to the coachman of a political prelate, whose vehicle was drawn up exactly in front of the entrance to the House.

The man, half asleep, gave his horses a sudden jerk and drove into the centre of the road, thinking to make place for the new arrival. The consequence was, that the wheels of the humble hackney became locked in those of the more aristocratic equipage. Barry and Lee Strange leaped to the ground in an instant. Unfortunately they both rushed to the same door of the coach.

"Can't you see where you are going?" exclaimed the bishop's coachman, in an angry tone.

"A common hack!" shouted several of the footmen, in a tone of derision, gathering round the two vehicles. Several officers of the House drew near. For some minutes there was a perfect Babel of languages, cursing, and abuse—in which, it is scarcely necessary to add, the vulgate prevailed.

During this confusion, the man who was inside with Fanny, darted out on the opposite side, and disappeared in the crowd.

"That Jem," mentally observed Miles, who saw the move, "is worth any money! He has got his eye-teeth about him!"

Satisfied that the object for which he had risked his neck was accomplished, he remained quietly upon the box. Every moment gained was an advantage.

By this time the two friends had forced

open the door of the coach. It was empty.

"Well, gentlemen!" said Miles, in an ironical tone, "I hope you have had your lark out—frightening the *osses*, and all but upsetting that respectable old governor what handles the ribbons so cleverly!.

"No fault o' mine!" he added, touching his hat to the prelate's coachman, who still remained upon his box, boiling with indignation.

"*Feller!*" was the only reply the man in livery deigned to make to what the speaker doubtless considered a very conciliating speech.

"As you please!" answered Miles.

"Villain! Where is she?" demanded Barry.

"Where is who?" said the ruffian, with the most provoking coolness.

"The child you have stolen!"

At hearing this accusation, Miles set up a hearty laugh.

"Child I have stolen!" he repeated; "that's a good un; as if I hadn't got kids enough of my own! I want no more mouths to feed! But it won't do, masters! If you are gentlemen, behave as sich, and pay me for the pretty lark you have had!"

"Ay—ay! pay the man!" shouted the footmen.

Here the officers interfered, and declared that unless they satisfied his demand they would take the two friends into custody; adding, that they might consider themselves fortunate at being let off so easily.

"Of course!" exclaimed Miles, who began highly to enjoy the joke. "These gentlemen won't see a poor fellow imposed upon! It's my belief you are no better than a couple of pickpockets—*pity there ain't a pump near!*"

"There is—there is!" was the general cry, and a dozen hands were outstretched to seize on the two friends. Then it was that the heavy cane of Lee Strange rendered essential service both to himself and the young painter: without being in the least particular where or how he struck, he soon cleared a passage through the crowd. Footmen and grooms lay sprawling in the road; not even the dignity of the officers of the House was respected.

"This way!" cried the victor, as he darted into St. Margaret's Churchyard.

Barry followed the sound of his voice. Fortunately the night was a dark one, and their pursuers not over-courageous. The most eager fell over the tombstones in their haste, and several, who had incautiously approached within reach of the cane, measured their length in a less agreeable fashion upon the rough, iron-knotted pavement.

In the midst of the confusion, Miles, who had no wish to be either detained or identified, drove off—not forgetting, as he did so, to give the coachman of the right reverend prelate, who was standing on the box, shouting to the pursuers, a cut with his whip over the face, which that very dignified person long and bitterly remembered.

"Say *gentleman* next time, my fine *feller!*" said the ruffian, with a chuckle. "Manners is the cheapest thing as is!"

Before returning home, where he doubted not that he should find the prize for which he had risked so much, the speaker drove back to the Haymarket, in order to return the hackney-coach to its real owner.

"Well!" said Lee Strange, as he and Barry, exhausted with the chase, stood under a solitary lamp-post in one of the narrow lanes leading to the Almonry, "now that the fun is all over, perhaps you will tell me what it has been about? After this, who shall accuse me of inconstancy? Have I not proved myself a very Pylades—followed like a hound upon the track?" he added: "though what the game curse me if I have the least suspicion; but I suppose it was a petticoat!"

"A child!" answered the young painter, with a sigh.

"A what? A child! Am I mad or moonstruck? I've known sportsmen, when they could not find a fox, hunt the trail of a red herring; but I never heard of following that of a pap-spoon before! My dear fellow," continued the speaker, "does it not strike you that we have made ourselves very ridiculous?"

This was put with such perfect seriousness by his volatile though kind-hearted companion, that poor Barry, despite his disapointment, could scarcely restrain a smile. In as few words as possible he related to his friend sufficient of Fanny's history to impress him with a sense of the danger she ran, and the misery her loss would occasion to those who were dearest to him.

"God help the sweet child!" he added, dashing aside a tear; "she has fallen into the hands of a cruel enemy!"

Lee Strange was one of those followers of fortune who have lost everything but heart in the chase: that was still as pure, fresh, and generous as when he encountered the first treachery in love or deceit in friendship. Though young, he had suffered much; but suffering had produced an effect opposite to the one it has on most of the world. It had taught him sympathy—not apathy. He listened to the history of Fanny, which his friend related, with feelings of pity and indignation.

"Would I had known it!" he muttered through his clenched teeth—at the same

time grasping "his young man's best companion"—as he facetiously termed his cane, "I would have killed the ruffian on the box!"

"And now we have lost sight of him, and with him, every clue!"

"Consider the pump!" said Lee Strange in an apologetic tone—for he felt that his impetuosity had been productive of more mischief than good; "no friendship could stand that—tossing in a blanket is nothing to it! But the night is too young to despair yet!" he added, in a more cheerful tone. "Where are we?"

"In the purlieus of the Almonry I should say!" replied Barry, looking round him; "the most dangerous place in London!"

"And exactly the sort of neighborhood," observed his companion, "to which the persecutors of poor Fanny would resort! Courage—courage! I have a presentiment! I know you will tell me that I have had a hundred in my time, and they have all failed; but this one I am sure will not!"

It was a forlorn hope—still it was one—and the two young men continued their search till morning, when, disappointed and dispirited, they separated; Lee Strange to his lodgings: Barry to his home in St. Martin's Court.

"Poor Sally!" he murmured, as he opened the door, which had not been locked all night—for not one of the inmates had retired to rest; "It is sad news I bring! God! how the absence of one being whom we love can desolate the heart!"

Eagerly during the long hours of the night had his footsteps been listened for. No sooner were they heard, than the heads of old Meg and Sally appeared at the door of the little parlor. As for the old actress, she was too much agitated to quit her easy chair; still, with the obstinacy peculiar to age, she had repeated the solicitations of her faithful servant and lodger to retire to her bed.

"My child—my child!" she exclaimed, in a tone of grief far more agonising than any she had employed in the exercise of her art, because more natural.

The painter, completely spirit-broken, sank upon a chair.

"You have found her!" said Sally, with an hysterical sob; "I am sure you have! You could never have the heart to return without her! You think to break the joyful intelligence to us by degrees—but joy does not kill; and, if it does, better to die than linger in this horrible suspense! Fanny—Fanny!" she repeated, as if she expected the child would rush into the room at the sound of her voice, "come to your sister! Come—come!"

"He ain't found her!" muttered old Meg, in her hard, iron voice, which sounded like the knell of hope; "he is too good to trifle with us!"

There was a gentle tap at the door; the blind lieutenant made his appearance, to inquire after the safety of his little favorite. Herr Weitzer and his wife followed him, and in their presence Barry related everything that had taken place, from the abduction of Fanny to the termination of his unfruitful search.

"Poor child!" said the soldier; "she evidently has enemies who are wealthy, who seem disposed to brave all risks to remove her!"

"They have murdered her!" exclaimed Mrs. Watkins, wringing her hands. "I am sure they have—the wretches!"

"Mine Got! I vish dey have—dat's all!" observed the musician; "I vill hang dem, if I sell mine fiddle to pay de rope!"

At the word "murdered," poor Sally burst into a passionate flood of tears, and frantically entreated her lover to hasten once more in search of her adopted sister—forbidding him ever to see or think of her again till she was restored to her.

The young painter was at his wits' end—he knew not where to go; but he rose to comply with the imperious command of the speaker, whose grief blinded her to the injustice she was guilty of.

Meg insisted on accompanying him.

"Better remain where you are for the present!" said the lieutenant; "I have reflected on the circumstances, and do not think that there is any immediate danger to our little favorite! Those who have carried her off are aware that she has friends—for they have proved their energy and perseverance! One of the ruffians—the driver—can at least be recognized!"

"I should know him from a thousand!" observed Barry, at the same time pulling his hat over his brows, in the peculiar style in which Miles was accustomed to wear it, and imitating his furtive, cat-like glance.

"That's him!" shouted Meg, clenching her hands till the nails made a visible impression upon the hard, honest palms; "I wish I had him—that's all!"

"I shall wait on the magistrates in the morning," continued the blind man, "and consult with them what is best to be done! I am not rich, but my means more than suffice for my wants now!" he added, with a sigh. "I will offer a reward of fifty pounds for her recovery!"

Had Rothschild suddenly appeared in the midst of the mourners, and proffered thousands, he could scarcely have produced a more profound impression than did the munificent offer of the speaker: not one of

them, with the exception of the old actress, had ever possessed such a sum in the whole course of their existence.

"Fifty pounds!" repeated Meg, who had a vague idea that it was something between ten and a million.

"Very handsome—very handsome indeed!' observed Mrs. Watkins.

Sally looked up in his face, and smiled faintly through her tears. Fifty pounds—it was a fortune! With fifty pounds they could do anything. Fanny would soon be restored to her, if money could accomplish it.

By the advice of the lieutenant, the party at last retired to snatch a few hours of repose, of which they had so much need.

Miles, after having returned the hackney-coach to its legitimate driver, and paid the fellow for the use of it, made the best of his way home; not, however, by the direct or usual road—he was too wary for that. In the wretch who lives at variance with the laws of society and the ferocious brute of the forest we find the same instinct; they have each more than one way leading to their dens.

Miles, for his part, had half a dozen.

Instead of returning by Parliament St., he entered the Park through Spring Gardens, by climbing over the gates, crossed over the sward, and reached the Bird Cage Walk without meeting a single being to question or interrupt him. Quitting the Park by Storey's Gate, he threaded with the familiarity of an old acquaintance the narrow alleys and streets which led to his house, and admitted himself by a latch-key.

"All right!" he said, as he entered the kitchen, where his better-half was dozing by the fire.

"Glad to hear it!" replied Bet.

"Where is the brat?"

"What brat?"

"Why, the one Jem brought!" replied her husband. "Come Bet," he continued, "a lark is all very well in its way; but its rather too late for such nonsense! I am tired as a wolf that has been hunted!"

"Or rather as a wolf that has been hunting!" observed his wife.

"Where is the child?" demanded Miles, striking his fist upon the table furiously.

"I tell you I ain't seen no child!" said the woman; "and as for larking, I am too sleepy for that! I suppose you have been disappointed again, and want to vent your ill-temper upon me; but I am quite ready for you, my fine fellow!" added the female fury, coolly tucking up the sleeves of her gown, and displaying an arm that might have felled an ox; "though I am only a woman, I ain't going to be put upon!"

The man caught up the light and rushed up stairs to the little chamber which had been prepared for his intended prisoner. The door wrs unbarred and the bed empty—his better half had spoken the truth.

"Baffled again!" he muttered, as he returned to the kitchen; "the devil himself appears to have taken the brat under his care!"

In his impiety the hardened wretch never once suspected that it was heaven.

At an early hour the following day he repaired to the residence of Mr. Foster; Martha, who had passed the night in anxious expectation, was waiting for him. A hundred times she had asked herself whether he would succeed; her mind was agitated by alternate hopes and fears—for the recovery of her adopted child was the dream of her existence. What a happy future did she not picture in providing for her wants, cultivating her understanding, and lavishing upon her all that affection could desire or bestow!

How her heart bounded when the house keeper informed her that the person she expected had arrived and was waiting in the library; how it sank when, on entering the room, she perceived that he was alone.

"You have failed!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and sinking into a chair.

"It has not been my fault!" replied the ruffian; "I did my best, but the man on whom I relied did not keep his promise!"

"I loathe this mystery!" said the woman; "it is as useless as criminal! I have no motive to conceal my actions—all the world may read them! Who is this man? What name does he bear? Where can I see him? Let him at once declare the price he sets upon the restoration of my child; if gold," she added, "can content him, he shall be satisfied!"

Now this was the very information which for many reasons Miles was determined not to give. Like most men who have made one false step, he found it easier to advance than to retreat; he knew the resolution of Martha when roused—the terrible means she had of punishing him. To tell her that his was the hand which first deprived her of Fanny—that but for him she might have gone and openly claimed her of those who would have been only too happy to restore her to her arms—was to provoke the resentment it was his interest to avoid.

"I don't know his name!" he said, in a dogged tone.

"False!"

"Nor his address!"

"False again!" repeated Martha; "the serpent does not forget his cunning, or the wolf its thirst for blood!"

"He is more cunning than I am!" exclaimed Miles. "I have set those on whom

I thought I could rely to trace him, but he has baffled them all. The attempt to discover his retreat perhaps has given him the alarm, and prevented his keeping his appointment. As for his name," he continued, "he has a hundred! I question if your grandfather, who employed him in his most secret affairs, were he living, could tell you his right one!"

His employer paused—the denial at least was plausible; she knew that Peter Quin in his multifarious transactions employed a variety of agents: it was possible that the speaker had encountered one of these, and that the fellow had been alarmed by the inquiries he had set on foot.

"Would I could believe you!" she answered, with a sigh.

"And what should I gain by deceiving you?" demanded her visitor, who saw that her suspicions were shaken; "is there another being in the world who would count down the yellow-boys by hundreds to recover the brat—the child I mean? Give me a few weeks more—I shall meet him again; but his fears must blow over first! Fail now, better luck next time! I don't ask a shilling," he added, "till I have succeeded!"

What could Martha do? The fellow's plea at least was plausible. She had no choice but to consent

"Be it so!" she said; "but remember it is the last trial: my heart would break with another disappointment!"

Miles devoutly wished that it would.

"Eyes you least suspect," she continued, "will watch you! Let me find that you are playing on my feelings—sporting with my anxieties—and you shall learn I have inherited something more than the wealth of my grandfather! See this man to the door," she added, to the footman who answered the bell, "and answer no questions he may ask respecting me!"

"I wish I could find out *where she lives!*" thought the ruffian, as he quitted the house; "I think I might hit upon something to lower her tone!"

The thought occupied him during the rest of the day, and Martha, spiritless and disappointed, returned to Brierly Grange.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Kind words and looks are but the precious seed,
Time ripens to that beauteous flower
Which men call gratitude. ROBIN GOODFELLOW.

It is extraordinary to observe the *different effects which* the same passion or feeling will at different times produce on the same organisation. Music, for instance—which at one moment produces the most exquisite pleasure, at another plunges us in profound melancholy; terror in the same person has been known to paralyse the courage or arm the soul with double energy.

Such was the case with Fanny. The first time she recognised Miles in the midst of the crowded theatre, a deadly fear took possession of her young heart—the consequences, as our readers will remember, were almost fatal; but when she found herself a second time in his power—hurried along she knew not whither—an inexplicable calm took possession of her

Perhaps it was the courage of despair.

"If you offer to stir or speak," said the man who held her in his arms, when he heard the dispute between Miles and Barry. "I'll strangle you!"

Fanny made no reply.

"Humph! So much the better!" muttered the fellow, thinking his prisoner insensible; "I shall have the less trouble with her!"

His prisoner was anything but insensible—for when the wheels of the hackney-coach got locked in those of the bishop's carriage opposite the House of Lords, and her captor sprang from the door opposite to the one her friends were endeavoring to force open, Fanny by a sudden movement disengaged herself from the folds of the shawl, crept under the horses' feet, at the risk of being crushed, and disappeared.

It was in vain that the ruffian attempted to follow her, uncertain as he was which way she had taken: terror lent wings to her feet, and before the man had recovered from his surprise, she had reached Palace Yard, and from thence directed her way to the bridge.

Some power indeed seemed to watch over her—for she threaded her way amongst the vehicles which even at that late hour thronged Westminster Bridge. One—an elegant caleche, drawn by a pair of spirited bays—dashed rapidly past her. With an energy which only extreme danger could have inspired, the desolate child sprang on the footboard behind, clung firmly to the springs, and was quickly whirled from the scene of her late peril.

Westminster Road, then Vauxhall were successively passed—still the intrepid child kept her hold. Something whispered her it was a struggle for life and death. It was not till the vehicle approached the common that she began to reflect on her situation.

"How they will grieve for me at home!" she murmured—and the thought brought tears into her eyes. "How shall I ever

find my way back? How return? Who will give me shelter?"

Whilst these and similar reflections were passing through her young mind, the carriage stopped at the entrance of a villa, to enable the footman, who was riding on the box, to open the lodge-gate.

Fanny seized the occasion to glide from her seat unperceived. In a few moments she was alone.

The night was a cold one, and the rain began to fall. The poor orphan sat down by the side of the road and wept bitterly: she thought of her comfortable home, her warm bed, the grief of Sally and the kind old actress.

"What have I done," she said, "that wicked men should seek my life? If heaven would forgive me and take me—let me sleep by the side of my dear mamma ——"

A loud peal of thunder, the precursor of a coming storm, added to her terrors, which were not diminished when she heard a heavy footfall at a distance.

Springing from the ground, she darted down the lane which ran parallel with the grounds of the villa, and entered a field in which was a hay-stack: the heart of the little fugitive expanded with joy when she beheld it—it was at least a shelter.

Mounting by the side from which several trusses had been cut, she contrived—not without some difficulty, however—to reach the summit, where she buried herself in the fragrant stack, secure, as she trusted, from all further danger.

"I can say my prayers here!" she thought; "God will hear me from here, as well as from my chamber!"

Clasping her little hands, she mentally repeated the prayer of our Lord, and begged of him to watch over and protect her.

Fanny had not been more than half an hour in her place of refuge, when she fancied that she heard voices at the bottom of the stack. She trembled and listened. The words "window" and "it must be done to night," fell upon her ear.

"Were they in search of her? What could they be speaking of?" she mentally asked herself. Suspense was worse than certainty.

Fortunately the wind was too high and the gusts of rain too violent for the intruders, whoever they might be, to notice the slight rustling of the hay as Fanny cautiously crept to the edge of the hay-stack, and peered over to see what was passing beneath.

Two shabby-genteel-looking men, whose avocation the experienced eye of the Bow Street officer would have at once detected, were seated on some of the loose hay, sufficiently near the stack to take advantage of its shelter; at a short distance was a lantern upon the ground, and a rough-looking dog, half terrior, half lurcher, crouched by its side, as if watching it. One of the fellows was smoking—the other amused himself by examining the priming of a pair of exquisitely mounted pistols, whose barrels gleamed in the rays which the lantern cast upon them.

"I wonder what detains Willy!" observed the first.

"At his old game, I suppose!" replied his companion; "a petticoat had always more attraction for him than the chance of a well-filled purse! We can do without him.

The speaker with the pipe made some objection.

"Pshaw!" continued the more resolute of the two, "when they are asleep, and with Andrews to assist us ——"

"How long has Andrews been in the service of the banker!"

"Three months," said the housebreaker; "and heartily tired he is of his situation! The old man is rich!"

"Still I say, put it off!"

"And Madame Garrachi and her diamonds?" objected the other.

At the name of the singer, Fanny trembled violently. She recollected her words of kindness, the flower, and the zeal with which she had insisted on her being re-engaged at the Opera House.

"I tell you," continued the speaker, "that such a chance may not occur again! She sups there to-night with her husband and some coxcomb of a lord, whose pockets are doubtless well-lined! The grooms and coachman all sleep over the stables! So, whether Willy comes or not, I am for doing the trick! They can't be long," he added, pointing to the villa; "Andrews has promised to leave the window of the laundry open when they are asleep!"

"Should they awake?" urged his companion, who did not appear to have any great inclination for the crime.

The man made a significant sign, by drawing his hand rapidly across his throat.

The child trembled so violently that had the speakers not been absorbed in discussing the details of their project, they must have heard the hay rustle above their heads.

Much to the reluctance of one of the housebreakers, they decided at last on returning down the road, in the hope of meeting the companion they expected.

Fanny watched their departure till, by the light of the lantern, which they carried with them, she saw them enter the lane. Then, without hesitating an instant, she slid from her place of concealment, and ran across the field towards the house.

"The window, and the name of An-

drews!" she repeated to herself—for every word she had heard impressed itself upon her memory.

That same evening Madame Garrachi and her husband supped with Fauntleroy, the banker, whose admiration of musical and theatrical celebrities is well known. The late Charles Mathews was a frequent guest at his table. Who that had seen him that night doing the honors of his table, which groaned beneath the delicacies of the season, would have imagined that the possessor of such seeming wealth, a few years later, would end his career upon a scaffold?

"One more song!" said Lord Vesey, a reckless young nobleman for whom the banker was in the habit of discounting largely.

The request was seconded by his host.

Madame Garrachi complied with great good humor, but declared that it must be the last—for the hour was late.

It was nearly three in the morning, and yet the gentlemen did not feel disposed to retire. Music, painting, all that could enchain the attention, had been discussed. The celebrated singer had illustrated each by some piquant anecdote or observation full of finesse and delicacy.

Just as she was about to return to the piano for the last song, the door of the drawning-room opened, and Fanny, pale as one of those marble statues of Italy which the lady had been describing, glided rather than walked into the midst of the party; her hair, damp with the rain, hung heavily over her shoulders. But for the fever of excitement in her deep blue eyes, she might have been taken for an animated corpse.

Never was surprise more general. We question if the banker, when the officer who arrested him first laid his hand upon his shoulder, experienced a deeper emotion.

Madame Garrachi was the only person who recognised her.

"You here, my dear child!" she exclaimed, "at such an hour!"

Fanny took her hand, eagerly kissed it, and sobbed out the words:

"You are safe—safe!"

"Safe!" repeated his lordship; "what does she mean?"

"She is cold!" exclaimed the kind-hearted woman; "her little hands are like icicles!"

"There is something very extraordinary in all this!" observed the banker, rising from his seat to ring the bell.

"*Restez tranquille!*" exclaimed the peer, restraining him. "Don't you see it is an emotion which madame has arranged—a surprise—a scene?"

"A surprise," repeated the singer, who *had been questioning* Fanny, "which but *for the devotion of this dear*, grateful child, might have have cost us our lives! The house is about to be attacked by robbers!"

At the word "robbers," the gentlemen started from their seats. The husband of the speaker was about to order his caleche—the very one which had served her so opportunely to escape from her enemy.

"Be calm, I beg of you!" continued the speaker, turning to her host. "What is the name of your butler?"

"Andrews."

"Has he been long in your service?"

"About three months."

"Everything confirms the truth of her statement!" exclaimed the lady—who, without informing them of the extraordinary circumstances by which her informant had been placed in a position to overhear the details of the plan for plundering the villa of the banker, imparted to them the details of the plot.

The gentlemen consulted a few moments amongst themselves: it was decided that the banker should ring twice—the signal that the presence of the butler was required.

When the fellow entered the room, he stared with astonishment on beholding the addition to the party. He could not comprehend the means by which Fanny had gained access to the house; he was still more surprised to account for the excellent terms on which the forlorn, wretched-looking child appeared to be with Madame Garrachi.

"Well, Andrews," said his master, "have you left the window open?"

"Window!" faltered the man.

"At what hour do you expect your friends?"

From the half-mocking tone in which the question was asked, the faithless domestic saw that his crime was discovered. He attempted to retreat from the room, but Lord Vesey, now perfectly convinced of the reality of the danger, detained him.

"Not so fast, my fine fellow!" he exclaimed.

With the assistance of his host and Monsieur Garrachi—who, by-the-by, displayed no very extraordinary courage on the occasion—the butler was secured, and bound firmly, as they thought, in the banker's easy chair.

"If you attempt to stir," coolly observed the peer, who had armed himself with a carving-knife from the supper-table, "or give the least alarm, I shall be under the most unpleasant necessity of silencing you! You understand me!"

The man darted upon him a look of mingled hate and terror.

"Very provoking, I admit!" continued the speaker; "the calculation was ably made—but the best sometimes fail! In-

stead of the diamonds of madame, a prison and a rope!"

"Rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Fauntleroy; "you, to whom I have been so kind—placed such confidence in—thought as honest as one of my own clerks!"

"We are all thought honest till we are found out!" growled the detected thief.

Most probably the hit was not intended, but it told—the banker changed color: probably even then he had made the first fatal step in the series of crimes which gradually led him to the scaffold.

He muttered the word "Impertinent!"

Guided by Fanny, the three gentlemen left the drawing-room—leaving the prisoner, as they thought, securely bound—and took up their position in the laundry, where the window was situated by which the robbers were to enter; Madame Garrachi accompanied them.

The danger was considered too pressing to admit of any one of the defenders leaving the house to alarm the coachman and grooms, who slept over the offices—the only other male servant in the house besides the butler was an old footman, who had long since retired to rest.

It was not without much persuasion on the part of her husband and their host, that the singer consented to retire to one of the rooms above with the child, whose presence after having pointed out the danger, as well as her own, was more likely to prove an embarrassment than an assistance.

"Have you no fire-arms?" demanded Monsieur Garrachi, addressing himself to Mr. Fauntleroy.

The banker recollected that he had a pair of pistols in his bed room—but, not knowing at what moment the housebreakers might arrive, he hesitated at going to search for them.

"Never mind your pistols!" exclaimed the peer, brandishing the carving knife, which he still retained; "the window is not very large—they can only enter one at a time; you seize the first that thrusts his head into the trap, and leave the rest to me!"

"Surely you will not——"

"Why not?" replied his lordship, with the utmost coolness; "my great ancestor, Gerald Vesey, was famous in the wars of the Roses for the skill with which he took off the heads of the Yorkists, at the Battle of St. Albans, at a single blow! I trust I have not degenerated!" he added, gravely; "to be sure a knife is not half so convenient as a sword—you will make allowance for that!"

Despite the danger of their position, the gentlemen could not avoid smiling at the gravity with which the noble speaker deprecated beforehand their criticism of his prowess.

CHAPTER XXXII.

How cunningly men seek to fence their sin!
OLD PLAY.

THE apartment in which the singer and Fanny had so unwillingly consented to take refuge was the bed-room of the banker, and situated directly over the laundry window, where the attempt to enter the villa was to be made: the chamber was furnished with all that the most fastidious could suggest. Portraits of beautiful women by Greuze—a noble Titian—the original study probably of the one in the Escurial—cabinets and tables of marqueterie and *petra dura*.

The bed was in the style of Louis Quatorze, of amber and blue silk, with a deep silver fringe—the chairs corresponded.

"Surely," said Madame Garrachi, looking round the room, "the owner of so much luxury is not without arms to defend a life which fortune seems to have enriched with all that can render it desirable!"

She looked round the costly chamber for fire arms—but in vain.

The key had been left in a cabinet placed in a recess by the side of the bed—she opened it. Under any other circumstances, the honorable-minded woman would have considered such a proceeding indelicate. A second door presented itself, leading to a recess or closet, concealed within the walls.

In the hope of finding a weapon of some kind, she pushed back the inner door, when a most singular spectacle presented itself.

"Go back, my love!" she hastily exclaimed to Fanny, who was following her; "this is no sight for you!"

The child, fearful that she had offended, timidly withdrew to the other end of the room.

The lady took one of the candles from the table, and entered the recess, in order to examine still more closely the cause of her surprise, and, we might add, terror.

Upon a beam which ran the whole width of the closet, was suspended *by the neck*, the figure of a man, the size of life. It had the appearance of a human being who had just been executed.

The apparatus with which the effigy had been invested was even more singular than the position in which it was placed.

Broad linen bands of great strength were passed under the feet, and continued to the

knees, round which they were buckled with leathern straps. These bands, with other strappings, were continued the entire length of the body, up to an iron collar, which was fastened round the neck: to this collar were attached three hooks, which caught the rope by which the mimic execution had been performed. By this contrivance, the figure, instead of being suspended by the neck, hung as it were in a cradle.

It was some time before the singer could understand the arrangement. It was an elaborate study of the means by which justice, with the connivance of the authorities, might be cheated of its victim.

She closed the door in disgust, and returned to the chamber.

"You are not angry with me?" said Fanny, noticing her pale looks and knitted brow.

"No, my love!"

She took the child upon her knee, and made her promise not to tell any one that she had examined the cabinet. The horrible mystery—for such she felt assured it was—regarded only the wretched owner of the mansion. Even from her husband she resolved to keep what she had seen a secret.

To the great disappointment of Lord Vesey—who most probably was the only one of the party who regretted the termination of the adventure—the attack upon the villa did not take place. The butler, who had been left in the drawing-room a prisoner, had contrived to reach a knife from the supper-table, and cut the cords which bound him. Just as the most daring of the housebreakers was on the point of climbing in at the laundry window, the voice of his confederate informed him that their project was discovered.

"Victory—victory!" exclaimed the peer, joyously, as he entered the chamber of the banker, followed by his host and Signor Garrachi; "the enemy have fled!"

"Thank heaven!" said the lady.

Directly on entering the room, the banker perceived that he had left the key in the cabinet. He bit his lip with the air of a man who feels that he has committed some unpardonable oversight, withdrew it from the lock, and put it in his pocket.

The gentlemen related everything that had passed.

"Confess the truth!" said Lord Vesey, addressing the singer; "have you not been horribly frightened?"

"At what?" she replied.

The eyes of the speaker and those of Mr. Fauntleroy suddenly met, and she fancied that his lips quivered.

"At what!" repeated the gay young *nobleman; "a pretty* question! Why most *of the ladies of my* acquaintance would have gone into hysterics at half what you must have endured to-night! Devilish sorry that the butler escaped—can't be helped! We'll hang him in effigy!" he added, turning to his host.

At the words "hang him in effigy," the confusion of the master of the house became so apparent that the two gentlemen observed it.

"I dare say, if the truth was known," observed Signor Garrachi, "you have had a famous escape! Ten thousand, at least, in the house!"

"Ten! Twenty!" said his lordship; "why he is as rich as Crœsus!"

The banker faintly smiled at the interpretation put upon his agitation, and modestly denied that his loss would have amounted to such a sum.

After such an adventure, all idea of retiring to rest was abandoned. The party returned to the drawing-room, where they remained till morning. It was in vain that their host entreated of madame and her husband to stay to breakfast. The former insisted on returning at once to London—urging as an excuse the anxiety of the friends of poor Fanny.

Sally had just sobbed herself to sleep when old Meg gently opened the door of her little chamber, and informed her that Madame Garrachi, the great singer from the Opera, was below, and waiting to see her.

"To see me?" exclaimed the astonished child—to whom such a visit appeared about as probable as that Queen Charlotte herself, or one of her princesses, had paid her a morning call.

The woman nodded in the affirmative.

"Impossible!"

"Perhaps it is!" said Meg; "but there she is! I showed her into the parlor. I hope missis won't be angry! She don't like them *furriners!* She says they are the ruin of the *perfession!* 'Spose they are!"

"My dear child," said the kind-hearted singer, as soon as Sally entered the room, "I come to dry your tears—to tell you that Fanny is safe!"

It was some moments before the poor girl could be made to understand her happiness. When she did, its transports carried her so far as to violate the respect and deference which Mrs. Watkins exacted from all who approached her, by rushing into her bed-room, kissing her dear old face, and telling her Fanny was found.

"Miss Carroll!" exclaimed the aged actress, in a tone of horror—for she was very careful that none but Meg should ever see her in her night-cap.

"Found—found!" repeated the girl,

dancing round the room, laughing and crying, at the same time, for joy.

The news soon spread through the house. The lieutenant, Barry, the German and his wife were soon roused to partake in the happiness the intelligence afforded.

With that benevolence which springs from the heart, madame insisted on Sally, Mrs. Watkins, and the young painter returning with her to convince themselves of the safety of their favorite—"whom," she added, "she intended to keep for some time at least with her!"

"The dear child has enemies!" she said: "and will be much safer with me!"

The reasoning was unanswerable: after the fearful proofs they had received of the perseverance with which Fanny was pursued, her old friends felt that they were no longer able to protect her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

No part of conduct asks for skill more nice,
Though none more common, than to give advice;
Misers themselves in this will not be saving,
Unless their knowledge makes it worth the having;
And where's the wonder, when we will obtrude
A useless gift, it meets ingratitude.

STILLINGFLEET

The night on which Madame Garrachi supped with the banker, at his villa at Wandsworth, had witnessed one of her greatest professional triumphs. She had been thrice called before the curtain—two royal dukes had left their boxes to compliment her—even the aged, penurious queen, their mother, had been betrayed into something like an act of liberality. She had sent the gifted artiste a diamond brooch, in which the centre stone was the only false one—*to be sure it was the largest.*

All this was gall and bitterness to Mademoiselle Cherini, whose talents, great as they undoubtedly were, were completely eclipsed by those of her more gifted rival. Mademoiselle was one of those singers to whom fame was far more preferable than fortune. Gold—her beauty could command that; it was the intoxication of applause, the homage of the great, the flattery of the sons of genius which she desired.

This she had long revelled in, enjoying her triumphs with all the airs of a despot, till the appearance of her rival in the musical world deposed her from her throne. To say that she hated her, would convey but a faint idea of the feeling which tortured her. It was a madness rather than a passion. She would willingly have given ten years of her beauty and life to have humbled and crushed her.

Ten years! Judge, gentle readers, how immeasurable must have been her detestation!

And yet, when they met, her face was decked with smiles. It was "*cara mia!*" and "*mia bella!*" Those only who are acquainted with the theatrical world, would have taken her for other than the affectionate sister of the woman she disliked.

To do Madame Garrachi justice, the acting and deceit were all on the side of her rival. She endured rather than returned her ardent protestations of friendship.

Perhaps she suspected her: where nature has not made woman cunning, she has armed them with an admirable instinct to put them on their guard against the enemies of their own sex, although she too often leaves them defenceless against those of ours.

Mademoiselle on the night in question entered her carriage, scarcely deigning to bestow a glance upon her admirers—her beauty procured her many—and drove in an excessive ill-humor to her lodgings in Jermyn street, where a relative who filled the sinecure office of chaperone had for some time been expecting her.

Madame Montereau—the name of the lady—was about sixty years of age, had once been good-looking, and, to judge by the care she took to repair the ravages of time, aspired to be considered as passable still.

Some said she was the artiste's mother—others her aunt; but, whatever the tie between them, she certainly exercised considerable influence over the capricious, passionate disposition of her charge.

"Still a child, *ma belle!*" she exclaimed with a shrug of the shoulders, half familiar, half contemptuous; "what has occurred now—has Lord Adolphus flirted with one of the *ballerini!*"

"You know," replied the artiste, "that the titled fool does not dare look to the right or left without my permission!"

"Humph!" ejaculated the old lady; "*La Garrachi* has been applauded again, I suppose?"

"Applauded!" repeated her rival spitefully; "it has been a triumph—an ovation! Thrice called for! The old queen herself sent her a diamond brooch!"

"You have grown suddenly fond of diamonds!" observed her relative.

"How can you torment me!" replied the excited woman; "I have a dozen far more valuable tossing about in my jewel-case! It's not the diamonds, but the honor, that I envy her!"

"That follows, of course, Estelle!" observed her companion, in a philosophical tone.

"She destroys my happiness!"

"*En verite!*"

"My life!" added Mademoiselle Cherini.

"You are a greater simpleton," exclaimed Madame Montereau, "than even I, who have had so many occasions of blushing at your weakness, imagined! *Voyons!* What have you to complain of? You are young, rich, beautiful, and talented: the success of a rival cannot deprive you of those merits!"

"But she can eclipse them," replied the artiste, "by her superior genius! If it be true that sorrow is the nurse of genius," she added, slowly, "I ought to possess it—for I am truly wretched!"

"A vulgar error!" observed the experienced woman of the world; "we are not wretched *because* we possess genius—but *although* we have been gifted with it! Those who affect genius generally affect unhappiness as the best setting for the counterfeit gem. Your own avowal proves the truth of my assertion. La Garrachi is more successful than you are, because she is happier: happiness gives her industry, energy, thought—she has something to love and live for!"

"Still I do not comprehend you!" interrupted Mademoiselle Cherini. "What can my rival possess which I have not?"

"A *husband*, whom she loves as women love when the heart is young, confiding, unsuspicious! A doubt of Garrachi's fidelity has never yet crossed her mind—yet every one else can see that he married her merely for the means of indulging his taste for idleness and luxury!"

"I despise that man!" observed the actress.

"So much the better, my love!" said her relative; "you will have the less difficulty in getting rid of him when he has served your purpose!"

"I do not comprehend!"

"Estelle," interrupted the faded beauty, "I could almost pity your want of firmness! I have pointed out to you that the only way to crush your rival is to ruin her happiness! Fortunately for you, that happiness depends upon a man who is vain, inconstant, incapable of appreciating the devotion of a love like hers!"

"I will think of it!" said the singer, moodily.

"Her voice will lose its purity and tone," resumed her adviser, "when her heart aches; her eyes will lose their vivacity when tears of jealousy have dimmed them! Since the emotions of love are denied me," continued the speaker, spitefully, "I must e'en put up with those which the world has left me! It will be an amusement to me to watch the struggle between you—the phases of the scene—the doubt—the suspense—the battle!"

"It is a wickedly clever scheme!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Cherini; "I have but one scruple——"

"Scruple!" interrupted the old lady; "my dear child, you ought never to have entered the theatre, where scruples of any kind are considered *mauvais gout!*"

"It is not the scruple you suppose!" replied Estelle, with a smile: "the man is so very insipid!"

"You are the less like to become seriously attached to him!"

"So vain!"

"He will fall all the easier into the net!"

"I shall never be able to endure him!" added the young lady.

This was her last objection. Not one had yet been made on the score of virtue and delicacy.

"Don't be too certain of that, *ma belle!*" said the female Machiavel. "I have known a flirtation conceived in folly and indifference terminate in a serious attachment! I remember," she added, with a sigh, "that the grand passion of my life began with positive aversion!"

"The grand passion of your life!" repeated mademoiselle; "as if you, who are all reason, reflection, prudence, and philosophy, ever really condescended to love! I should like to see the man that could have touched your heart!"

The features of Madame Montereau became suddenly contracted, as if a spasm had seized her; but she quickly mastered her emotion.

"Are you ill?" demanded her friend.

"A cramp, my love—nothing more!" replied the lady, with hypocritical firmness. "What were we speaking of?"

"Of the man you loved!"

"He has been dead long since!" said the aged coquette, in a light-hearted tone; "let the poor thing rest in peace! Perhaps he was nearer related to you than you imagine; but think of your own affair, and the advice I have given you!"

"I have thought of it!"

"And the result?"

"That I will destroy her happiness," exclaimed Mademoiselle Cherini, with a look of intense hatred, "even though I lose my own!"

"Brava—brava, Estelle!" cried her adviser; "that look and gesture would have created a sensation on the stage! When do you commence—to-morrow?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

What man so wise---what earthly wit so rare,
As to descry the crafty, cunning train
By which deceit doth mask in visage fair,
And cast her colors, died deep in grain.
SPENSER.

It is time that we introduced Signor Garrachi to the especial notice of our readers, since he is destined to act no unimportant part in the development of our story—a sort of human pivot on which the passions work—useful as the hinge of a door, and almost as insensible.

Alberto Garrachi, an Italian by birth, was the son of a respectable lawyer at Milan. Nature, as is frequently the case in the sunny regions of the south, had done more for his person than his heart. When a mere boy, he had been remarked for the elegance of his figure, the faultless regularity of his features—which were of that Antinous-like caste painters recognize as the ideal of unintellectual beauty.

At seventeen he was quite the rage amongst the belles of his native city; at eighteen he was compelled to quit it. An Austrian officer of high rank took it into his head to be jealous—very foolishly, no doubt; but as the Austrians were then masters of Italy, the object of his wrath deemed it more prudent to visit Paris than run the risk of being sent a prisoner to Speilburg.

With a scantily-furnished purse he reached the French capital, then just emerging from the horrors of the first revolution, and like some terrified beauty, faintly drawing her breath under the Directory.

The next year witnessed Napoleon's wondrous march over the Alps, and the downfall of the German power in Italy; but the young scapegrace felt no disposition to return. The excitement of Paris pleased him—she women fascinated him—and he frequently declared that, if ever he did sacrifice his dear liberty, it should only be to a Frenchwoman.

Unfortunately for the gifted object of his choice, he kept his word.

What between the gaming-house, giving lessons in Italian, and the opera—where he found employment for his talents as a musician—he contrived to make a tolerable living.

At the last place he became struck with the person, and still more with the voice, of a very young girl—the daughter of an *emigré*—who had been compelled, to avoid a worse fate, to take to the stage as a means of existence. He would willingly have dispensed with the marriage ceremony, had it been possible; but, young as Mademoiselle Eugenie was, her soul was too pure for that.

Her virtue and her voice, whose extraordinary quality and power Alberto was the first to recognize, decided him. He married her, and was astonished to find at the end of six months that he did not regret the *sacrifice*—for Madame Garrachi began to rise rapidly in the favor of the public. As he had calculated, her voice proved a fortune.

One child—a boy, about the same age as Fanny—was the only issue of their union.

For several years the life of the gifted Frenchwoman was a series of brilliant triumphs. Even Italy—fastidious Italy—owned her powers. Her reputation became European—she was happy. The excitement of her profession, the frequent change from one capital to another, travel, study, adulation, fresh faces, the whirl of her existence, left no time to examine the foundation upon which her happiness was reared. In the blind confidence of her affectionate nature, she thought it built upon a rock; there were many who could have told her that it was but sand.

If Signor Garrachi did not love his wife too dearly to risk her earnings at the gaming-table, or squander them in wanton extravagance, he prized himself too highly to risk the *dolce far niente* of his existence by such imprudence. True, he sported an elegant equipage, kept a first-rate table, and dressed with all the magnificence of a *nouveau riche*. These would have been trifling failings, had he felt but one spark of gratitude or true affection to the woman by whose genius he lived.

Having determined to follow the advice of her relative, Mademoiselle Cherini at once commenced her attack upon the heart—pah! the vanity, we should have said, of Alberto Garrachi.

Her first advances were like those of the approach of age—scarcely to be perceived. It was some time before the signor—vain as he was—fancied that Mademoiselle Cherini regarded him with more than usual attention: and even then so cleverly was the impression conveyed, that she left him in doubt whether he had been deceived or not.

One important point at least was gained: he thought of her—and that was more than the husband of Madame Garrachi had ever done before.

About a fortnight after the above conversation, Madame Garrachi—who was singing in the opera of *Otello*—was observed to cast several glances from the stage towards the side-wings, where her husband and Mademoiselle Cherini were engaged in an animated conversation. The artful woman had chosen the great scene in which the hapless Desdemona so pathetically laments the cruel change in her swarthy lord. The recitative—

Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria—

had just commenced, and the great artiste sang it as divinely as usual. Perhaps the words awakened a foreboding echo in her heart.

At the commencement of the aria she appeared distressed, and instead of concluding it with the brilliant *roulade*—which the audience anticipated, and were waiting to applaud—her voice suddenly gave way.

There was a murmur—then a burst of applause as enthusiastic as any which had ever greeted her previous exertions.

"How stupid!" muttered the signor, darting from the side of his companion to receive his wife at the wing.

His *interest*—not his heart—was touched.

"You hear!" said mademoiselle to Madame Montereau, to whom she spoke in an under-tone; "had I made such a failure, they would have hissed me!"

"They will hiss her *next time!*" calmly observed the tempter.

"Never!"

"We shall see!" continued the old lady, with a bitterly sarcastic smile: "my experience against your impatience! You forget that I was once as great an idol with the public as she is now!"

"Well—well!" muttered her relative, impatiently.

"I lived to be hissed by the same audience that a year before had taken my horses from my carriage and dragged it in triumph from the San Carlos to my Hotel in the Stradi di Toledo! I never sang a note since," added the speaker, "*even to myself!*"

They separated. Mademoiselle Cherini entered *en scêne*, whilst her adviser returned to the green-room.

Madame Garrachi, with the susceptibility of a generous mind, severely blamed herself for the weakness she had betrayed—which, in answer to her husband's inquiries, she attributed to sudden indisposition.

"Most unfortunate!" he said; "the Regent is in the house!"

There was a murmur of applause from the front.

"As I live," he continued, "they are crying 'brava' to that aria of Cherini's, which she never did, and never will sing well!"

The eyes of his wife began to brighten.

"She has no genius!"

"Oh, Alberto—*vous est méchant!*"

"No flexibility of voice—in fact, no soul!"

"And I was weak enough to feel jealous," *thought the singer*, "of a little attention—*a harmless conversation!* I must never confess how foolish—how very foolish—I have been!

"I am better," she said—"much better, now! Fear not I will redeem myself!"

Her husband observed that the great scene was past.

Talent seizes occasion—it is the gift of genius alone to create it. In the last act, the singing and acting of Madame Garrachi were so exquisitely pathetic, that the audience were alternately in raptures and in tears. At the end of the opera, the Prince Regent himself commenced the applause, which ended in her recall before the curtain.

Never was triumph more complete. The momentary failure was forgotten.

The gifted woman and her worthless husband returned home. The former convinced that she had given way to a ridiculous, unfounded suspicion, for which she severely reproached herself; the latter satisfied that his interest—that is, the popularity of his wife—his *speculation*—had suffered no material damage.

"I must not flirt with Cherini *at the wings* any more!" he thought—for he had not been deceived by the plea of indisposition.

"I am satisfied—quite satisfied—that I wronged him!" mentally exclaimed the singer; but it shall not occur again! I am convinced I have no ground for jealousy—and yet——"

And yet! How often does the doubt that little word implies glide like a spectre between the heart and happiness—the mind and its repose. *And yet!* it announces that the worm jealousy hath set its teeth in the root of confidence.

Let the world blame, ridicule, suspicion as much as it pleases—in its cold irony show it no mercy—for it deserves none—tear it to rags—bespatter, trample it—exercise its wit upon it, as a target for ball-practice; but spare true jealousy, which, like the Arabian gum, exudes from the heart only after it has been wounded.

If it is merely a weakness, it will correct itself; if a crime, at least it carries its punishment along with it.

The next morning, at rehearsal, Mademoiselle Cherini inquired with the most affectionate solicitude after the health of the woman whom she so bitterly hated—whose happiness she was plotting to destroy.

Madame Garrachi replied to her rival with more than usual cordiality—so determined was she not to let her husband perceive what she considered the weakness of her heart.

"And now, Signor Alberto," continued mademoiselle, drawing a chair and seating herself in such a position that neither hus-

band or wife, without being positively rude, could escape, "like a dear, good creature, finish your story!"

"*Dear, good creature!*" mentally repeated her victim. "I must have been deceived! Guilt would be more cautious!"

"What story?" demanded the gentleman, failing to take the cue as cleverly as it was given.

"What story!" repeated the lady. "Why the one you were relating last night, when my sweet friend here was singing the recitative in the third act."

"Yes—I recollect! Bianca di Capella!"

"No—you finished that!" hastily interrupted the heartless woman. "The one I mean is of the student and the guillotine!"

At the word "guillotine," Madame Garrachi rose hastily and quitted the green-room. Most of her family had perished by that fearful engine during the horrors of the first revolution: no wonder that the mere name unnerved her.

"Imprudent!" said Alberto.

"*Comment?*"

"The very mention of the guillotine upsets my wife," he added; "whose family were royalists, and, I believe, noble."

"Well, but the story!" urged mademoiselle.

"Some other time!" replied the gentleman.

"When? *Where?*"

"This evening," whispered the Italian, "at your own house! With Madame Montereau as chaperone, there can be no impropriety!"

The lady affected to blush, and the speaker, without waiting for a reply, hurried out of the room after his deceived, confiding wife.

"It is the crisis!" exclaimed the successful *intriguante*, as she entered her elegantly-furnished drawing-room in Jermyn Street, where her privy councillor and relative was seated. "He is coming this very evening!"

The *ex-prima donna* appeared to reflect for a few moments.

"Did you invite him?" she said, after a pause.

"*Pas si bête!*" was the reply.

"I am glad you did not!" continued the aged woman, who, with the recollections of her own disappointments and sorrows fresh upon her, could plot, without the least compunctious visitings of conscience, the destruction of the happiness of one who had never injured her—one of her own sex, too. Had it been one of ours, the crime might have been less reprehensible. "A declaration will follow!"

"Of course!"

"How will you receive it?"

"There I require your advice, my dear, excellent friend!" replied Mademoiselle Cherini; "for positively I have not made up my mind—the man is so insipid. True," she continued, musingly, "he has fine eyes, and there is a triumph in winning him from the woman I detest; but, *entre nous*, I firmly believe that he is more in love with himself than ever he has been with his wife!"

"Not unlikely!" was the cynical rejoinder.

"Or ever will be with me!" added the younger of the speakers, concluding her speech.

"Not if you play your cards well!" observed Madame Montereau, seriously; "a defeat will redouble his passion—for you will have piqued his vanity—the only sensitive point in his composition! You must blush—appear very much distressed—nay, even offended—at his declaration—request him to leave you—and don't fail to let a tear or two be seen when he obeys you!"

"But will he obey me?" asked Cherini.

"Of course he will! If not, my love, I am always at hand to play Propriety, as these stupid English call it! Your only object is to excite a passion—to make a fool of him!"

"Nothing more!" she replied; "and *yet*——"

The last words were uttered to herself. Her companion smiled—for she guessed what was passing in her mind, without hearing them. The truth was, that the handsome person of the Italian had made a deeper impression than Mademoiselle Cherini chose to confess.

The gentleman arrived, and was received by the actress—in more senses of the word than one—with affected confusion and surprise.

"You were serious, then?" she said.

"Perfectly! Could you doubt me?"

The comedy so cleverly arranged was acted as comedies are seldom acted nowadays—and perhaps that is the reason why so few men of genius condescend to write them. To the perfect satisfaction of the author, the long-expected declaration was made, *and repulsed.*

Alberto left the house of the artful syren more intoxicated with passion than ever.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Why should we weep when children die?
They 'scape the hand of thought and sin:
Stretched in their innocence they lie,
Fair as the first-pluck'd flowers of spring.
BIRTHDAY ODE.

THERE is nothing in humanity more en-

gaging than childhood. Its graces and affections, like the tendrils of the young vine, twine themselves so closely round the hearts of those who are its support and guide, that it becomes almost impossible to separate them.

Felix Garrachi, the only child of the singer, had inherited the characteristics of both his parents. He was gifted, beautiful, capricious, passionate, and generous—the pet of his father—the idol of his mother—who loved him—as mothers only love—with that deep devotion which sees into the future. The defects—the very genius of her boy alarmed her.

On Fanny's first introduction to the house, the spoiled urchin regarded her with jealousy and dislike. He could not endure the thought of another sharing the caresses of his parents. At the end of a week he tolerated her, and before a month had elapsed could not endure her a moment from his presence; for no sooner had he discovered, with the intuitive perception of his years, that the little stranger was no rival in the affection of madame, but merely an object of her benevolence, than he made her his companion, his playmate and friend.

It was beautiful to watch the two children—so different, yet each equally lovely: the boy, his hair and eyes dark, like most of the infants of the sunny south—impetuous, wayward, yet generous—at one moment quarrelling with his playmate, because she could—or, as he poutingly declared, would—not understand him—the next, throwing his little arms around her, and passionately kissing away the tears his fury had drawn forth; the girl fair—oh, how dazzlingly fair!—her features radiant with the holy innocence of childhood—her hair floating in masses of natural curls over her neck and shoulders.

How frequently has the climate of England proved fatal to the children of the south—especially when transplanted at too early an age to her humid soil! Despite the cares, the tender solicitude with which Madame Garrachi watched over her child, a slight hectic cough settled on his chest—the forerunner of that fatal disease, consumption, which has desolated so many a once happy home by robbing it of its most graceful ornaments.

The mother became alarmed. The signor, who had by this time fallen completely into the toils of the artful Mademoiselle Cherini, only "pooh-poohed," and laughed at her fears. The first fine weather, a little sun and fresh air, he declared, would set all to rights. She, listening to his hopes, rather than her convictions, believed him.

The sun came at last—as he generally comes in England, like a lazy laggard half-ashamed to show his face; the air, too, blew freshly—but the cough of little Felix increased. Madame insisted on sending for a physician; her husband went for one, but took care to inform him on the way of what he termed his wife's unfounded apprehensions.

The man of science received both his cue and *his fee* before making his visit.

"See how thin he is!" objected the anxious mother, her fears but half allayed by the assurance that there were no symptoms of consumption.

"His age, madame?"

"Eight years, sir!"

The physician declared that he was merely outgrowing his strength.

"I told you so!" exclaimed the signor, in a tone of satisfaction—for he well knew that no persuasion or motives of interest would have induced her to remain another day in England, had she really been convinced that the life of her boy was in danger; "you are too anxious!"

His wife looked at him reproachfully, as if to ask whether it were possible for the heart of a mother to feel too anxious where the life of her only child was at stake.

Independent of the heartless father's desire not to separate himself from the syren who had enthralled him, Signor Garrachi had another, and, if possible, a yet meaner motive: the opera season was but half over, and madame's engagement was a most lucrative one.

"Still," said the physician, hesitatingly—for the man had some conscience—"we cannot be too careful: the curse of our English climate is consumption. Prevention is better than cure: what I recommend is change of air!"

"Italy!" exclaimed the singer.

Her husband looked dreadfully annoyed.

"Humph—no! too warm! climate too exciting!" replied the medical man; might produce the effect to which at present there are only slight—very slight—predisposing causes! What I should recommend would be a few miles from London—Surrey, for instance. Ha!" he added, as if suddenly recollecting something; "I have hit on the very place! A friend of mine, who has retired from practice, has a delightful retreat near Richmond. I know that he has occasionally accommodated invalids. He is skillful, kind, and—— But perhaps madame would consider the distance too far, or the terms——"

"Are of no importance, compared with the health of my boy!" interrupted Madame Garrachi, pressing Felix—who began to consider the visit of the man in black a bore—to her bosom. "When can I see him?"

The physician offered very considerately to drive over himself; in fact, the house was his own, and the retired medical man whom he had so highly recommended, no other than his father-in-law, who conducted it for him.

It was not the first instance we have seen of science playing into the hands of cupidity.

In three days the boy was taken to Richmond: at the end of a month the disease had made such rapid advances that it was pronounced dangerous to remove him.

Then it was that Felix reaped the reward of his kindness to Fanny. His little playfellow waited upon him with the most untiring assiduity; sat entire days by his bedside, endeavoring to amuse him—to soothe his fretful humors and impatience. Never was the devotion of one human being to another more touching and complete. Three nights a-week, despite the grief which consumed her, Madame Garrachi continued to delight the audience of the King's Theatre; every other moment was passed with her dying boy. Little did the Duke of This and my Lord That, as they wondered at the exquisite pathos of her strains, imagine that they were wrung from the agony of her maternal heart—that her very soul was incorporated with them. Never had she been so popular or so wretched.

Rumors of the *liaison* between her worthless husband and unprincipled rival had reached her, but they scarcely augmented her sorrow: the first overwhelming grief rendered her comparatively insensible to the pain of the second; probably, too, her soul was armed by the shield of scorn. Perhaps she ceased to consider him as the lover of her youth—the husband of her choice—the being to whom she had confided the happiness of her life, and the rich treasure of her love; for behind the specious mask, she saw the mercenary, heartless man who had speculated upon her genius—her rising fame—and indulged in an easy, luxurious existence from the exercise of her talents.

If it were so, it was fortunate for herself—for, let the heart once despise the being to which it has clung through good and ill—feel that the idol it has worshipped is of clay, instead of gold—and the cure is half complete. There may still be regrets, tears, and agonies—yet they are but the throes of an expiring passion—the straining of the chain before it breaks—the struggles of the snake as we uncoil its deceitful folds from around the heart, to let it beat more freely.

Signor Alberto frequently wondered, as he gazed on the thoughtful features of his wife, whether the rumors of his infidelity had reached her—for not one word of reproach or expostulation had ever passed her lips. She endured her misery in silence—hers were the wrongs

> Too proud for words—too deep for tears—
> The Niobe of modern years.

In his vanity he imagined that she loved him still, and chose to ignore the truth, for fear of losing him entirely.

This idea, which none but a mind void of delicacy and honor could have entertained, added to his fatuity and confidence.

Mademoiselle Cherini felt that she had destroyed the happiness of her rival, and yet her triumph was but half complete—the genius of the woman she hated remained unsubdued. It required the loss of a purer love than the Italian's to crush the energies of his gifted wife.

If at times her voice flagged, or she appeared absorbed and regardless of the scene, it was only necessary for Madame Garrachi to hear her enemy speak—to catch her insolent smile—and in an instant she was herself again—would pour forth a gush of melody modulated by such exquisite science, that even her husband would pause to listen to her, and mentally asked himself what were the attractions which diverted his affections from a creature so gifted—*so profitable*.

"She has millions in her voice!" he muttered, more than once; "I am a fool to risk the loss of her!"

Risk the loss of her! Could he have read what was passing in the heart and brain of the woman he had treated so worthlessly, he would have seen that he had lost her already; it required but the snapping of the last tie between them to render their separation eternal.

The tie, we scarcely need observe, was the life of their son.

There is no disease more cruelly deceptive than consumption; one day it bids us hope—the next, despair. How frequently has the hope of a parent mistaken the pale, hectic flush upon the sufferer's cheek for the symptoms of returning health—the brilliancy of the eye, the full beating of the pulse, for increased strength—and offering up a mental prayer of thanksgiving that its supplications have been heard. Such was the case with Felix, who appeared suddenly to mend; his voice became stronger, his breath more free—even the heart of his mother was cheated in a delusive, short-lived hope that he might still be spared to her.

"You will come to-morrow, mamma!" exclaimed the child, with his former vivacity, as he threw his little arms around her neck; "I do so wish to see you to-morrow!"

With the utmost difficulty his mother tore herself away; but she had promised to appear that night at the theatre. She knew her rival was ready to take her character in the opera, and resolved not to afford her such a triumph.

Madame Garrachi did not forget to thank Fanny for her unwearied kindness to her friend and playfellow. The child looked as if she expected her to kiss her as usual; but the singer could not—her heart was full: it would have appeared like treason to her own dying child.

"Not now!" she murmured: "not now!"

Young as she was, Fanny comprehended the feeling, and silently retraced her steps, to watch by the bed-side of Felix.

On reaching her home—her now desolate home—Madame Garrachi found her husband busily engaged in examining her jewel-case. There was nothing very unusual in the circumstance, and yet she fancied that he appeared confused. *As a matter of course*, he inquired after his son; the unhappy mother could not reply to him—a flood of tears was her answer.

"Not worse?" he exclaimed, in a tone of self-reproach.

"They say he is not!" replied his wife; "but I do not believe their words! A mother's eye is not to be deceived! Why," she added, wringing her hands, "did I bring my treasure to this land of gold and death? But I am punished—rightly punished! He asked for you anxiously; the dear child thinks you have forgotten him!"

Alberto colored deeply. He felt that the reproof was just.

"I am just about to ride to Richmond," he said. "It was my intention to have gone yesterday—but so—so many circumstances prevented me!"

Madame observed the hesitation of her husband with a bitter pang. She guessed but too well the name which ought to have replaced the word "circumstances."

"I shall be back," continued the unnatural parent, "in time to escort you from the theatre."

The artiste looked in his face with a faint smile. It was long since she had experienced such a mark of his attention.

"There!" he said, kissing her on the forehead, "be brilliant—be yourself tonight! You will have the most distinguished audience of the season: the Regent and his brothers—the old Queen—the youthful Princess Charlotte! I will bring you news of our dear boy!"

So saying, he drew on his gloves, and left the drawing-room.

For some time the singer stood with her *eyes fixed upon the ground*. She felt violent pains both at her heart and head, but scarcely heeded them, so completely was she absorbed in the bitter thoughts which oppressed her.

"*Brilliant!*" she repeated, at last; "*myself!* How easy to advise—how difficult to follow! Oh, yes!" she added, bitterly; "I shall be brilliant as an icicle on the brow of the corpse—as the glow-worm creeping over a new-made grave! My sleep has been brief! I am young—very young—to be startled from my dream of life so soon—it was my first and last!"

With this reflection, she began to prepare herself for the duties of the night, by selecting the jewels she intended to wear, &c.

Many a duchess might have envied the diamonds of Madame Garrachi. Scarcely a crowned head in Europe but had contributed to enrich her *écrin*. It had been estimated at no less a sum than thirty thousand pounds. With the exception of Mademoiselle Mars, no actress ever possessed so valuable a collection.

By a caprice—perhaps a presentiment—she suddenly resolved not to wear one of them; but carefully replaced them in her casket, and sealed it.

"I will save *them*, at least!" she murmured.

Her thoughts were of her boy rather than her gems. How willingly would the unhappy mother have parted with the glittering baubles to have restored the rose to his wan cheek—to have heard once more his merry laugh, redolent of health and life.

Throwing a large cashmere round her, madame took the casket under her arm, and left her lodgings on foot. She did not choose the servants should know which way she directed her steps. Arrived in the Haymarket, she took a hackney-coach, drove to Coutts', and asked to see the principal.

After the extraordinary discovery she had made at Wandsworth, the artiste did not deem it prudent to trust her diamonds in the hands of Fauntleroy.

The banker, who was one of her greatest admirers, received her in his private room.

The founder of the banking-house of Coutts and Co. was a little old man, whose countenance was the very expression of shrewdness. By his industry and perseverance he had created a fortune. One of his daughters had married an earl: the other, the well-known Sir Francis Burdett, of political notoriety.

When his son-in-law was committed to the Tower, old Queen Charlotte sent notice to Mr. Coutts that in three days she would

withdraw her money—amounting to a vast sum—which was in his hands.

The reply was characteristic of the man.

"Three days!" he repeated, to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, who had been directed to make the arrangement. "Inform her most gracious majesty that *three hours'* notice is quite long enough to withdraw three times the amount from the bank of Coutts and Co.!"

The money was not withdrawn.

The worthy banker was a passionate admirer of the theatre, and had his boxes both at the Opera and the national establishments of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Four-and-twenty hours after the death of his first wife, he married Miss Harriet Mellon, a rather popular actress, who had long been her *friend*.

The lady was the late eccentric Duchess of St. Albans.

Madame Garrachi was personally well known to Mr. Coutts: he had long admired her talents, and was no stranger to the generally reported *liaison* between her worthless husband and Mademoiselle Cherini.

Her request that he would receive her jewels and deposit them in the vaults of his establishment was granted—not without an observation, however, "that he understood Mr. Fauntleroy was her banker."

"I have no confidence in Mr. Fauntleroy!" was the reply; "my husband has rather a large sum of money in his hands! But that is his affair—my jewels are my own, and I wish to feel that they are safe!"

The old man slightly smiled as he finished writing out the receipt.

Just as the artiste was about to take her leave, after thanking him for his kindness, the door of the room opened, and a lady very showily dressed unceremoniously entered the office. She was a stout, good-looking, but rather countrified person, with a profusion of black, curling hair, which fell in masses from beneath a white whalebone bonnet—then all the rage. There was a slight expression of anger—perhaps uneasiness—upon her features.

"Harriet," said the banker, "did they not tell you I was engaged?"

"Yes!" replied the visitor; "and with whom? That must plead my excuse! I could not resist the occasion of making the acquaintance of one whose genius we both admire so much!"

Mr. Coutts introduced the ladies formally to each other.

Miss Mellon's jealousy—perhaps it scarcely merited the name—was quickly dissipated when she read in the features of the celebrated singer the unmistakeable signs of a sorrow which no feeling the old banker's guineas could have inspired could have traced there. Her heart was naturally warm—perhaps generous: she had heard of her husband's infidelity, and pitied her.

With much good nature, she insisted on setting her down at her lodgings, as soon as she found that Madame Garrachi had not her carriage at the door. Perhaps, also, she wished to avoid the reproof of her aged admirer for her indiscretion.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a sigh, half philosophical, half jesting; "we poor women are very much to be pitied! Even you, gifted as few of God's creatures have been, do not appear to be happy! Pardon the freedom of my remark," she added, pressing her hand; "but indeed I sympathise with you! Don't feel it—do as I do—struggle with grief at the very commencement!"

"Perhaps you do not love?"

"Perhaps," said the actress, "*I will not love!* There lies a whole history in the distinction! That heart is already lost which suffers love to obtain even a temporary influence over the imagination! Like the tiger's whelp, it may be crushed in its infancy, but becomes a tyrant and master if permitted to arrive at maturity! You will think me a sad rattle!" she continued; "perhaps a heartless one; but if I could help it, there should not be a tear shed upon earth, unless of joy!"

Madame Garrachi secretly envied the philosophy of her new acquaintance, whose frank, open confidence pleased her. What would she not have given to have disembarrassed her heart of the serpent that had coiled around it?

We can conceive no greater agony to a refined and noble mind than to feel itself the slave of a worthless passion—to love and despise the same object—to have the inclination to subdue its influence, and lack the power to do so—to know the destroying effects of its progress, and yet to feel it march on and on, like the lava of a volcano burning up life's flowers in its passage—to resolve one moment, and break that resolution the next.

Miss Mellon proffered her friendship with so charming a grace to her new acquaintance, that, despite the engrossing nature of her sorrow, she felt pleased. There is a charm in sympathy—it is the loadstone which attracts the heart.

That night Madame Garrachi appeared in the great character of Dido, in the *Didone Abandonate*, and never sang more exquisitely. At first there was a murmur of surprise amongst the audience. They had been accustomed to see her as the unhappy queen, adorned in all her diamonds: not a gem glittered in her long dark hair. In the last scene, in which

she mounts the funeral pile, instead of the royal robes, she was attired in a dress of simple white.

Some approved, others blamed the change; but all agreed that her acting had been perfect.

As the curtain descended, amid showers of bouquets and enthusiastic plaudits of the audience, a piercing shriek was heard. Many feared that the dress of the singer had caught fire—others, that it was a new point in her acting. Both parties were mistaken.

The actress had recognised at the wing her *protegée*, Fanny, standing as pale as death, waiting for the conclusion of the scene.

Her heart forboded the tidings of which she was the messenger.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Pardon is for men,
And not for reptiles---we have none for Steno.
And no resentment : things like him must sting,
And higher beings suffer . 'tis the charter
Of life. The man who dies by the adder's pang
May have the crawler crushed, but feels no anger.
'Twas the worm's nature ; and some men are worms,
In soul more than the living things of tombs.
BYRON.

THE mother had rightly divined the intelligence of which Fanny was the bearer. A sudden change had taken place, and her boy—the tie—the only remaining tie—which bound her heart to life—was dying. For several hours during the night he had done little else than pronounce the name of "mother"—that of his father had not once escaped the sufferer's lips.

Without waiting to change her dress—merely throwing a thin veil over her head—Madame Garrachi hurried to her carriage followed by the orphan object of her bounty, whose tears flowed fast and bitterly—for she loved her capricious, wayward playfellow with the love of a sister. At her age, ingratitude is a stranger to the heart.

As the carriage whirled rapidly along the road to Richmond, Fanny felt terrified at the silent immobility of her companion. She would have felt relieved could she have heard a sigh—not one escaped her. From the back of the carriage her dark eyes flashed like things of living light. It was the fire of despair burning within them.

The child ventured timidly to take her hand.

"Not a word, Fanny!" said the artiste; "not a breath! The least sigh of sympathy *would make me human*—and I require *a nerve of iron—iron!*"

Although the horses were kept by the driver at their utmost speed, their progress appeared slow as the laggard's pace to the impatient heart of the mother, who bitterly blamed herself for having left her son even for an instant. Every plaintive sigh which was murmured in other ears—every cry of pain she did not soothe—seemed like a robbery of her right.

At last the carriage stopped at the entrance to the grounds in front of the house. The unhappy woman sprang from it, heedless of the rain, which was falling in torrents, and pushing open the gate, glided rather than walked, towards the villa. A light was still burning in the bed-room, and cast its sickly rays upon the lawn.

"Thank God!" she murmured, "I shall see him once more! He will know me—draw his last breath upon the bosom where he was first pillowed!"

Some few moments elapsed before the servants, who did not expect her arrival so soon, came to the door. By this time she was drenched completely through by the pitiless rain. Her long, dark hair had escaped from the ribbon which bound it, and fell in heavy masses over her neck and shoulders,

Truly has it been said that there is a majesty in grief. The most expressive features become eloquent under its hallowing touch; like the faded canvass o'er which the moisture has been passed, the picture re-appears.

The footman made way silently for her to pass. The man seemed to comprehend that a word at such a moment would have been a sacrilege.

On the appearance of his mother in the chamber, the little sufferer extended his arms, and a smile, faint as the last rays of sunset on an autumn landscape, illumined for an instant his pale features. She was by his side in an instant.

"Have you brought me the flowers?" he murmured.

"No, Felix!" observed madame; "in the morning ——"

"Morning!" interrupted the boy; "I shall be in heaven in the morning, mamma—I know I shall! The doctor and nurse both look so sadly at me, and I feel—as if—my breath ——"

He gasped, and, taking her cold hand in his, placed it on his heart.

"Cold—cold and wet!" he murmured. "Kiss me," he added; "kiss me! I won't die, now you are come! Stay with me! You won't leave poor Felix again?"

"Never—never!" sobbed his mother, in a tone of self-reproach.

The dying boy appeared satisfied with her promise—for he smiled again, and gen-

ly drawing her to his side upon the bed, crept into her arms, still murmuring that "she was so cold."

The first burst of sorrow past, Madame Garrachi looked round the room as if she expected to have seen some one. A pang of bitter disappointment wrung her heart. The father of her child was absent—where, she dared not ask herself.

For several hours Felix remained in a state of profound repose. The restless irritation, the feverish anxiety which for so many hours had tormented him, appeared to have gradually subsided since his mother had arrived. It seemed as if he had all he desired—for he never once asked for his father.

Towards morning, Fanny—who had been watching all the night at the foot of the bed—noticed that he suddenly opened his eyes, and made an effort as if to stretch forth his little arms. It was death.

The next moment heaven had one cherub more—earth one sufferer less.

The piercing shriek of the bereaved mother brought the surgeon and nurse from the adjoining room. It was some time before they could disengage her arms from the close embrace in which she held the corse of her dead boy.

What else on earth had she now left to cling to? What to her broken heart was the gift of genius, for which the world admired and envied her? What the fame she had won—the wealth which, like the harvest in autumn, waited but the gleaning. The blow had fallen upon her affections and crushed them. Life remained—but it was life without hope. She would have given all she possessed to have wept—but tears were denied her; not that their fount was dried, but it was frozen.

It was in vain that the master of the house entreated Madame Garrachi to quit the chamber of death—that his wife added her persuasions; even the entreaties of Fanny were unheeded. With desperate calmness she rejected their well-meant advice—closed with a firm hand the still open eyes of her dead boy, and requested to be left alone with him.

The surgeon hesitated.

"A mother's sorrow," she exclaimed, impatiently, "should be sacred! Heaven alone should hear her prayer for strength and resignation! Go—go!" she added, hastily; "the sight of a human face but adds to my misery!"

The gentleman well understood the feeling which prompted her request, and, taking Fanny by the hand, led her from the room.

The artiste no sooner perceived that she was left alone with the dead than she hasily drew the bolt of the chamber door. The act seemed to relieve her. It shut her from the world—its prying sympathy—which sears the wound—not salves it.

"Dead!" she sighed—"dead! Life's only flower—my pretty treasure! And I can not give my murdered boy one tear! I am punished! Oh, I am rightly punished! I should have listened to the voice of my heart only—to its fears—and fled with him from the land of gold and death to my own sunny France! He would have revived there—his smiles would have returned! But now too late—too late!"

How few of us—no matter whether brief or long our space of life—but have pronounced, in the impotence of regret, in the hour of anguish and self-accusation, when the past—the inexorable past—like a spectre rears its iron front before us, those bitter words, "*too late!*" How often will the recollection of the smiles we have chased, the hopes we have blighted, the hearts we have wrung, return with them!

"*Too late!*" murmurs tardy repentance over the coffin which contains the victim of its passions. "*Too late!*" sighs regret, as the betrayed and outraged friend, who once shared our confidence, thoughts and dreams—whose hand was ever open to assist, head ready to counsel, heart to feel our distresses—passes us with a cold, conventional smile of recognition—or worse—with a mask of ice, which conceals the agony of the wearer, by benumbing it!

"*Too late!*" It is oft times the epitaph of the highest hopes, the purest feelings, the noblest gifts that humanity has received and perverted—the seal upon a sepulchre, whose stone no angel's hand will ever roll aside.

Madame Garrachi had none of these reproaches to make to herself. She was the victim of heartlessness—not the perpetrator. The only strong affection her heart had ever known were for her husband and her child; they were her first and last. Unlike her worthless rival, Cherini, she was not one of those who could love and love again.

As the first rays of morning penetrated the chamber of death, there was a gentle rap at the door. It was her husband. The desolate wife and mother, had heard the roll of the carriage as it drove up to the house.

When the signor quitted his lodgings the preceding day, it was with the intention of visiting his dying son; but the syren who had enslaved him had insisted on his attending her to a brilliant party, to which both were invited by one of those moths of fashion who love to surround themselves with the celebrities of the day. Mademoiselle was celebrated for her beauty more than for her

talent; besides, she had been much talked of lately, and the noble host would have deemed his circle incomplete without her.

Although they had to pass the surgeon's house on their way to the splendid villa of their host, the heartless woman had refused him permission to alight even for an instant, observing, "that there would be time on their return." And her dupe obeyed.

"*Eugenie, c'est moi!*" said the signor.

Madame rose from her knees, and unbarred the door.

Heartless as he was, Alberto felt a momentary pang when his eyes fell upon the corpse of his son—his first born—stretched like a flower untimely withered on the bed before him. He did not dare to raise them from the dead to the living; he dreaded to meet their gaze.

"Dead!" he faltered; "dead!"

"And without once pronouncing your name, or expressing a wish to see you!" observed his wife in a bitter tone. "He felt that you had forgotten him, and his ——"

She could not complete the reproach: she felt a rising weakness in her throat—a swelling at her heart—and she had resolved to be calm as an accusing angel's voice.

"How strange and sudden! Who would have supposed? Poor boy—poor boy!"

Not knowing what else to do, the hypocrite pretended to weep, and approaching the bed, would have imprinted a kiss upon the brow of his son.

"Do not touch him! Do not profane the majesty of death—the sanctity of innocence!" almost shrieked Madame Garrachi.

"He died upon my bosom! His mother's kiss was the last his lips received! Do not stain them by a less holy one!"

"Eugenie, I do not understand you!"

"God!" exclaimed the unhappy woman, clasping her hands and sinking on her knees by the side of the bed; "has this thing no heart!"

Overwhelmed with shame and remorse—for he did feel at last—the Italian attempted to raise her: she shuddered at his touch.

"Eugenie!" he said, vainly attempting to soothe her; "I have been wrong—negligent, perhaps—but not culpable! You know I love you, and idolized poor Felix! Let me entreat of you to quit this room. Think of your health!" he added, for the first time perceiving the damp state of her dress; "*for heaven's sake, think of your voice!*"

The scornful laugh which broke from the lips of the singer startled him. She rose in an instant to her feet, and stood erect and pale before him. His last words had revealed to her all for which he had ever *sought or valued her.*

"*My voice!*" she repeated; "it has rained gold for you, and misery for me! Would it had been changed to the raven's note when first you heard it—I had then escaped your snare! Shall I tell you, Alberto, the nature of the love you bear me—paint it in its true, mercenary colors—compress it in one word—*calculation? My voice!* it was a fortune to you—enabled you to indulge your tastes—your appetites—your sensual luxury! It has left me!" she added; "and the tie which united us is broken! Whether I live or die, starve in a foreign land, or not, will give you no second thought, or care!"

"Eugenie!"

"Leave me," she continued, "with the dead—with the wreck of hopes and dreams—with a wound for which time has neither balm nor cure! Leave me—and—no—no—I cannot curse you—memory one day will avenge me!"

"This is jealousy—madness!" exclaimed Signor Alberto, beginning to feel seriously alarmed—for his interests were at stake.

"Jealousy!" said his wife, becoming suddenly calm. "Man—man—how little do you know me! I could as soon be jealous of the dead, as of the love which can change and change, or a wanton's smile lure from me! Go!" she added, advancing to the window, and throwing it suddenly open; "your companion, sir, is waiting for you!"

At the sound occasioned by the raising of the sash, Mademoiselle Cherini, who was seated in an open carriage at the door, looked up, and the eyes of the injured wife and her rival met. She could not endure the gaze of the woman she had so cruelly outraged—a suspicion that death was in the room suddenly occurred to her.

"Home!" she exclaimed to the coachman.

The man gave his horses the lash, and she felt relieved that the menacing glance of Madame Garrachi was no longer fixed upon her: it seemed to remind her that there was a future.

Like an instrument whose cords have suddenly given way, the nerves of the sufferer yielded to the long suppressed agony of her heart, and she sank helpless as a child by the window. A brain fever followed, and it was weeks before the desolate woman recognised the tearful face of Fanny, who had been her patient attendant.

As for her worthless husband, he was punished in the only point on which his selfish nature was vulnerable: *her voice was gone*—its wondrous flexibility, its pure, flute-like tone destroyed—a hoarseness had settled upon her lungs, which neither science, change of climate, nor that still

greater change which time scarce fails to bring, ever could remove; it sounded, if ever she attempted to bring forth a note, as if it came from beneath a pall.

Then it was that the triumph of Mademoiselle Cherini was complete—she had no longer a rival to dispute her supremacy. True, the audience at His Majesty's Theatre listened at first with coldness to her efforts—for they still remembered her predecessor; but this coldness gradually wore away. The town required to be amused—excitement was a necessity to the *habitués* of the Opera—and they created it.

Before the close of the season, half London was at her feet, and many began to wonder how they had ever admired Madame Garrachi.

"Well!" said her confidante and adviser, as they drove home from the Opera, after a performance which had been little less than an ovation; "I trust you are satisfied?"

"I am satisfied!" murmured her pupil.

"And will dismiss that indolent, imbecile Alberto!" continued the ex-prima donna. "It is long since I have been tired of witnessing his affected airs and graces! The idiot imagines himself a victor, where he is only the dupe!"

Mademoiselle made no reply.

"Come!" resumed the speaker, "it is folly to affect a passion with me! I know that you despise him!"

"True!" muttered the artiste.

"And are tired of his love!"

"That is by no means so sure!" replied Mademoiselle Cherini; "your advice has proved fatal to more than one! True, I have succeeded in destroying my rival—in taking her place in the favor of the public; but it has not been without a wound in my own heart!"

"What?"

"I love him!"

"Heaven help you, then!" exclaimed the female Machiavel, with an ominous shake of the head. "You are even more to be pitied than the rival you have so cleverly crushed!"

"How so?" demanded the singer.

"Her agony is over—*yours is yet to come!*"

Signor Garrachi, during the illness of his wife, made several—and we need not say unsuccessful—attempts to discover what had become of her diamonds: his rage and disappointment at not finding them may be better conceived than described. It was in vain that he questioned her waiting-maid and the people of the house—he could elicit no information: and for the best of all possible reasons—they had none to give; he even had the baseness to attempt drawing the secret from his victim during the access of delirium.

A vacant laugh and the name of her boy were the only replies he could draw from her.

"She must have suspected my intention," he thought, "when she surprised me with her *écrin*, and has concealed them!"

To discover where became doubly important, when he recollected that the fortune of his ill-used wife was in France—where, happily for the gifted artiste, the law protects the civil rights of woman. In France a wife is the partner—not the slave—of her husband; has an equal right with him in the joint estate—can sue and be sued on account of her separate property, and even withdraw her dower from his hands, on showing cause before the tribunals.

Much to the annoyance of her husband—who calculated on and wished his wife's death—the kind-hearted actress had insisted upon calling in the most eminent medical advice—had placed in the sick room of her *protegée* two English nurses, in whose fidelity she could place implicit trust: so that Madame Garrachi was never for a single instant alone.

Little Fanny, who had eyes and ears for everything which might affect either the health or safety of her benefactress, reported all that passed.

Signor Alberto began to hate the child.

In order to have his victim more completely in his power, he had arranged to remove her to the house of one of his countrymen, who resided a few miles from London. The pretext of change of air was quite sufficient for the people of the hotel—and as for any opposition on the part of his wife, that he considered might be easily overcome, or explained by attributing it to the wandering of her brain.

On the very morning on which he had calculated on putting this fiend-like project in execution, the carriage of Miss Mellon drove up to the door of the hotel at an earlier hour than usual. Bitterly did the Italian, as he saw her alight, laden with flowers and fruit for the poor invalid, curse her officious friendship.

As she entered the hall, Fanny whispered a few words in her ear.

"We shall see!" said the actress, compressing her beautiful lips—for they were beautiful then; "he does not know me yet!"

The fair speaker possessed a hold over the worthless man which she had pledged her word to her old friend, Mr. Coutts, to employ only at the last extremity.

England, it must be remembered, at the period of which we write, was still at war

with France—for the short-lived peace of Amiens had been broken, and the laws regulating the residence and correspondence of aliens were stringent in the extreme: a mere suspicion was sufficient to cause a man to be sent out of the country, or consign him to a prison.

Colonel De Lille—a pretended *emigré*, but in reality a spy of the French Emperor—had just been sent to Newgate: so well had the impostor acted his part, that he had obtained access to the best English society. Many persons who had known him refused to credit the proofs of his delinquency, and one noble lord, at whose house he had been a frequent guest, carried his confidence so far as to demand from his place in Parliament the reasons of the minister for ordering his arrest. When produced, the reply was overwhelming—never had the aristocracy of England been more completely duped than by the cunning Frenchman.

There were grave reasons to suppose that Alberto had been one of his agents—for he had cashed several cheques at the banking-house of Mr. Coutts, which the colonel had drawn upon a firm in Holland.

The Italian was too much a man of the world to display his ill-humor—your true gamester seldom shows his cards; on the contrary, he received his—or rather his wife's—visitor in his blandest manner—declared, with a profusion of compliments, that her kindness would never be effaced from his memory—and announced, as if it were the most matter-of-course affair, his intention to remove madame from London.

"Where to?" inquired the lady, drily.

"To a cottage belonging to a friend of mine, a short distance from town," replied the signor; "where every attention that friendship can bestow will be lavished, to lead her to forget her loss!"

"There are losses," replied Miss Mellon, "which never can be forgotten—even," she added, in a pointed tone, "that of the affection we once prized!"

The gentleman colored deeply: this was no fencing, but a home-thrust—a downright honest, earnest blow.

"You have not replied to my question, permit me to observe," continued the speaker, "where this elysium—this Lethe—is situated to which you propose to convey my still suffering friend!"

"It is too humble to be honored by your visits!" was the reply.

"Perhaps they have ceased to be agreeable to her husband?" said the lady.

Alberto saw that a rupture was unavoidable, and replied only by a low bow.

"Well, that is honest, at least!" exclaimed the actress. *"I like plain-speaking*—it places one so much at one's ease! She sha'nt go!"

"Madame!"

"Can't you understand me?" said his visitor; "she shall not go!"

"Who will prevent it?"

"I will!"

"I am her husband!" observed the gentleman, getting seriously angry.

"More the pity," replied Miss Mellon, in a tone of withering contempt, "that the fate of one so gifted should be linked with such a [redacted]! Spare your grimaces, sir," she added, "and looks of indignation! Reserve them for those who do not understand such trickery! I have been an actress all my life, from the barn to Covent Garden! Every phase in the art is familiar to me—you can't impose on me! I can tell the difference between spangles and pure gold!"

The honesty both of speech and purpose in the speaker completely disconcerted the heartless libertine. He saw that the struggle was likely to be more serious than he anticipated; still he could not comprehend the means by which his visitor hoped to baffle him. He had consulted a lawyer, and ascertained that in England a husband's authority over his wife was absolute.

"You said," he began, after a pause, "that you would prevent the removal of Madame Garrachi, my wife, to the country!"

The lady nodded in the affirmative.

"May I inquire by what means!"

"Certainly!" replied Miss Mellon, with an ironical smile; "nothing can be more just or reasonable! Cards on the table, as you gentlemen say! In the first place, I shall drive from here to the office of the Secretary of State, and place before him three cheques, drawn upon the house of Van Hassalt, of Amsterdam, by Colonel de Lille, now a prisoner in Newgate, upon a charge of *high treason*, drawn in your favor, and negociated by you," she added, "through the firm of Coutts and Company!"

"I can explain!" exclaimed the signor, turning very pale.

"Of course you can!" replied the lady; "at least to your own satisfaction; but whether to that of the government is another affair! Fortunately," she added, "it is not with credulous women that you will have to do, but with men who know the world, its tricks and subterfuges, almost as well as you do yourself! You can explain, you say! Have you calculated the consequences if you do *not explain*? Bets are already ten to three at the clubs, that Colonel De Lille will be hanged within a month!"

The signor shuddered: he felt that he was defeated. The first draft he had re-

ceived from the colonel was for some important information he had extracted from the unsuspecting confidence of one of the clerks of the Foreign Office, whom he had introduced behind the scenes at His Majesty's Theatre; the second, for repeating a conversation he had overheard at a dinner party given by the private secretary of one of the ministers; and the third Mademoiselle Cherini had obtained for him from one of her admirers, who was connected with the Admiralty.

Had he been really innocent, there would have been nothing to fear; but conscience was his accuser, and he trembled at its voice.

It must not be supposed that a man so honorable as the founder of the great house of Coutts and Company possessed any *proof* of the Italian's complicity with the colonel, whose cheques he had been in the habit of forwarding to his correspondents in Holland, as he did those of many noble *emigrés* who had succeeded in placing the wrecks of their fortunes there. His guilt being discovered, naturally led to the suspicion that Alberto was no stranger to it.

"Well, sir!" said Miss Mellon, "your decision? Am I to order my carriage or not?"

"I should never pardon myself for giving you so much trouble!" replied the gentleman, with a polite bow.

The actress smiled: she had succeeded.

"At your *desire*," she continued, "I will postpone my visit to the Home Office, then!"

"Postpone it!" repeated the Italian, in a tone of alarm.

"For ten days! Let me see: the season closes in six! Come, I will be generous with you, and make it twelve! If after the expiration of that time you are found in England, it will be at your peril! You understand me?"

The detected spy *did* understand her, and mentally cursed the accident which had placed him so completely at her mercy.

So completely was Signor Garrachi subdued by the noble scorn and decision of the speaker, that he even degraded himself—if further degradation were possible—by thanking her for her forbearance, and pledged himself not only to quit the country by the time she proposed, but to remove at once from the hotel, and inflict his presence upon the woman whose happiness he had so heartlessly destroyed no more.

He kept his word, and took his departure that very day.

As soon as Madame Garrachi was sufficiently strong to be removed, instead of the asylum to which her husband intended to consign her, her disinterested friend caused her and Fanny to be conveyed to a cottage close to her own villa, at Highgate, which she had prepared for her reception. It was one of those charming retreats in which sorrow might find repose—the heart, jaded, worn by the conflicts of feeling and passion, forgetfulness—a shelter from the storms of life—a nest of content, if not of happiness.

By the influence of Mr. Coutts, whose connection with the great financial houses of Europe gave him the means of interfering effectually in her interests, the greater part of the fortune of Madame Garrachi was remitted through Holland to England. The rest was abandoned to her husband, now openly living with Mademoiselle Cherini, the brilliant star of the Opera House, in Paris.

"Thank heaven, my dear friend," said Miss Mellon, as she announced the success of the banker's interference in her affairs, "that the future is secured!"

"The future secured!" repeated the singer, in a tone of irony; "I understand—I am not left to starve!"

"You forget your jewels! Under any circumstances, they would have been safe!"

"True—true!" replied the unhappy woman, scarcely heeding her.

"Come—come! you promised to be calm!"

"I am calm!" exclaimed Madame Garrachi, with sudden energy; "but it is the calm which precedes the storm! Whilst the thunder is gathering, and the lightning tempering its forked fires in the clouds, there is a stillness in nature—it is so with me!"

"I do not comprehend you?"

"Listen!" said the still suffering invalid, "and you will understand me!"

At that moment the sounds of a voice, young, fresh, and flexible as the notes of the lark, came from the adjoining room: never had more delicious harmony fallen upon the ear.

It was Fanny, practising her daily lesson.

"You are quite right!" observed the actress, struck with admiration at the purity of tone and exquisite expression in one so young; "such talent ought to be cultivated! It will amuse you—occupy you!"

"It will!" observed Madame Garrachi, with a bitter smile.

"And the poor child will love you!" added Miss Mellon.

"Love me!" repeated the late idol of the Opera; "she will do more than love me!"

"I do not comprehend?"

"*She will avenge me!*" added her instructress, between her clenched teeth; "it is for that I live!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

O thievish night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller? MILTON.

IT is not to be supposed that Miles, who had been trained in the school of Peter Quin, would leave any means untried to discover the abode of Martha, whom he both hated and feared. Hated, for having subdued and humbled him—and feared, from the power which her knowledge of his crimes had armed her with.

Still it was not without considerable misgiving that he set himself to the task: it was necessary to proceed cautiously—for he knew that if his intended victim obtained the least clue to his proceedings, or entertained a suspicion of his design, she would keep no terms with him. Many men—bunglers in the trade of villany—would have commenced operations by setting on parties to watch; but Miles was too cunning for that: the information which he required he determined to obtain himself.

For this purpose, he became a regular frequenter of a public-house in one of the narrow streets leading from the Temple to Blackfriars, which was well known as the resort of lawyers clerks and messengers; there, as he expected, he encountered Mr. Griffiths. Had he known how bitterly the little man resented the contempt with which Martha had treated his advances, Miles would perhaps have been more open in his overtures; as it was, he contented himself by an occasional word or nod of recognition—this game continued for several weeks.

At last he ventured upon what he considered a very decided move: he invited Mr. Foster's clerk to a game of cribbage, and lost it—not, like a bungler, by such barefaced bad play that a child might have seen through his intention—but by one or two pegs only.

"You really play very well!" observed the pompous Mr. Griffiths—for out of the office he considered himself a very important personage.

"But you play better!" replied his antagonist, with the air of a man who did not altogether relish his defeat; "I suppose you will give me my revenge?"

"Willingly!" said the clerk, calling at the same time for a second glass of ale—as a general rule, he took but one.

They played, and a second time he was a winner.

This slight commencement gradually ripened into a close acquaintance. Still the ruffian was compelled to proceed cautiously—for, with his quick perception of character, he had discovered that his new friend was just as suspicious of the intentions of others as he was himself.

"In this manner months elapsed before he had an opportunity of approaching the subject he was so anxious to converse upon.

"Ah, Mr. Griffiths," he observed, one very wet evening, on which they were the only two guests in the little parlor; "I wish I had been a lawyer!"

The clerk raised his eyes from the paper, and looked at him as if astounded at the magnitude of his ambition.

"I know," continued the speaker, "that it requires a long head and much *larning*; but if I could have found some clever fellow, like yourself, to have taken me as a partner, I might have found the money and you the brains!"

This time Mr. Griffiths did not think the ambition of his vulgar acquaintance quite so preposterous.

"But I suppose," continued Miles, "that you will be a partner in time?"

"It is not impossible!" replied the little man, in a fretful tone; "but it all depends on the caprice of a boy!"

"A boy, sir?"

"Yes!" continued the gentleman; "my principal has an only son, whom he is anxious to bring up to the profession! Though, heaven knows—of course this is between ourselves—that he has not one qualification for it! He is headstrong as a mule—conceited as a monkey—rude as a bear—and as extravagant as a miser's heir!"

Could Clement Foster have heard the character thus flatteringly portrayed of him by his father's clerk, the generous high-spirited young man would have known the exact value of the obsequiousness and cringing submission which, in his ignorance of the world, he mistook for attachment.

"Are misers' heirs extravagant?" demanded Miles, in a careless tone, as if the the answer was a matter of perfect indifference to him.

"Generally," said the clerk; "but not invariably—since I know of one who does not spend a tithe of her income! But then," he added, musingly, "she is rich!"

"A woman!" ejaculated his companion; "that accounts for it—they are more economical than we are! Well," he continued, "I know another, who inherited, a few years since, five thousand pounds of an old curmudgeon to whom people frequently gave alms in the streets!"

"Five thousand pounds!" repeated Mr. Griffiths.

"Yes—and he has doubled it! Now I think he and your lady friend might make a good match of it!"

"She has refused a better offer than that!" observed the clerk, with an air of conceit; "but she will never marry—unless," he added spitefully, "it is the young scapegrace I was lately speaking of: he appears to have found the way to her favor—*he* is invited to shoot, and pass what time he pleases, at *the Grange!*"

Miles mentally noted the word that had escaped him.

"Perhaps they are of the same age?" he said.

"No—no!" replied the disappointed lawyer's clerk, impatiently; "she is old enough to be his mother!"

"Not the less likely to marry him, for all that!" observed the ruffian, in a philosophical tone; "women are queer critters—young and old—green and grey at the same time! I should like to have tried my luck with her, for all that!"

"You?"

"Ay—I!"

"You, then," said Mr. Griffiths, "are the man who doubled the five thousand pounds?"

Miles nodded in the affirmative, and his new friend's respect for him evidently increased.

Miles had frequently noticed that Mr. Griffiths brought letters with him, which were doubtless intended for the post—for on such occasions he left at a much earlier hour. This led him to concoct a scheme which promised to gratify his long delayed curiosity at last.

One evening, when he saw that he had a larger number than usual, he proposed to the clerk a visit to Drury Lane, adding, that he had an order for two. The bait took: a hackney-coach was sent for, and off they started. Just as the vehicle entered the Strand, he pulled the check-string, and told the driver to stop at the first post-office.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the clerk; "how fortunate! I had nearly forgotten my letters!"

He drew them from his pocket, and held them ready.

"It is not worth while both of us getting out!" observed Miles, as soon as the coach stopped, at the same time taking them from his hand. "Anything to pay?"

"No—franked!"

"All right!" said the ruffian, dropping them one by one deliberately into the box, and his own, which was merely a blank, along with them. As he did so, he contrived to read the address of each. One was to Clement Foster, Esq., Brierly Grange: he had learned all that he wished to know.

The *affair passed so* rapidly that Mr. Griffiths had no time to reflect on the indiscretion he had committed. How could he possibly suppose anything incorrect in the conduct of a man whom he believed to be worth ten thousand pounds—who invariably lost to him at cribbage—who treated him to the theatre—and, moreover, insisted upon paying the coach hire? They passed the evening together, and parted each mutually pleased with his new acquaintance.

A day or two after, Miles announced that he was about to quit London for a few days, an affair of importance calling him into the country.

"A love affair?" observed the clerk.

The fellow who had so cleverly duped him gave him a knowing wink, and owned that a woman was mixed up with it.

The next day he started for Berkshire, having first shaved off his whiskers, and mounted one of those respectable wigs called a "Brown George" over his rough, iron grey hair.

So complete was the metamorphosis, that even Bet declared she should not have recognized him; he appeared quite respectable.

On reaching the village nearest to the Grange, he contrived, under pretence of purchasing a small farm in the neighborhood, to make such enquiries as convinced him that he had at last discovered the retreat of Martha Quin; the next point was, how to avail himself of the information he had acquired. He hesitated little about committing crime—detection was the only thing he feared.

The house, which was large and exceedingly old-fashioned, and what in the country its generally termed a "show-house." It contained a room in which Cromwell was said to have slept, and a large gallery hung with portraits of its former possessors.

It was a bold step to take, but he determined to visit it—and, with this intention, concealed himself several days in the home wood nearest the mansion, in order to select the most favorable opportunity; not that it was his intention to introduce himself clandestinely—he was too prudent to run that risk *more than once;* his object was assure himself of the absence of Martha, and then to walk boldly up, and make his request to the housekeeper.

The third day the occasion presented itself—for scarcely had the carriage with Martha and Miss Wyndham crossed the lawn, when Miles presented himself at the door, and expressed his wish to see the house.

Mrs. Everett hesitated: it was not that she was absolutely forbidden to show it—but she knew the nervous dislike its present tenant had to strangers.

"If there is any objection," said the very respectable looking gentleman in the brown wig, "I can call some other time; but Farmer Rudge told me you would be happy to show it!"

Farmer Rudge was one of the housekeeper's best friends—Miles had ascertained that. His name vanquished her hesitation; it was impossible to disoblige the friend of so old a friend. Mrs. Everett even carried her complaisance so far as to invite him into her own room to take a glass of wine after his walk; an offer which her new acquaintance had the politeness to accept.

Cromwell's room was the first that was visited.

"Here it was," observed the old lady, as she pointed to the bed on which the great regicide had slept, "that the ghost of the murdered king was supposed to have appeared to him!"

"Do you believe it?" demanded the visitor.

If she did not exactly believe it, the housekeeper had a sort of half faith upon the subject, and looked with no very favorable opinion upon those—especially of her own rank—who affected to treat the tradition with derision.

"It was all very well for estated gentry," she used to observe, "to doubt—they had a right to think as they pleased;" but for persons who were no wiser than herself it was an impertinence—and she resented it accordingly.

Miles very soon perceived her weak point, and took care to improve the favorable impression he had made by expressing his perfect belief in the tale which had been handed down in the servants' hall at the Grange for centuries; and added something about once having heard *summut* himself.

In the picture-gallery two things riveted his attention: the first was the portrait which had so excited the curiosity of Martha on her arrival, and which she had caused to be removed from the room of the housekeeper,

"It's devilish like!" he exclaimed.

"Like whom?" demanded his guide.

"Oh, no one that you know!" muttered the visitor.

The domestic did not feel quite so assured of that: she remembered the agitation of Miss Mendez when she first beheld the portrait; recollected the life which the present baronet had been compelled to lead—not that she knew or suspected how chequered it had been; but she made no *further observation.*

*The second object which attracted the attention of Miles was the well-known cabi-*net of Peter Quin. Like the rest of the furniture in the picture-gallery, it was exceedingly ancient, and not altogether out of place in the locality to which it had been introduced.

"Oliver Cromwell's dressing case, I suppose?" said Miles, pointing to the piece of furniture.

"Oh, dear no!" replied the old woman, with something like an air of disdain at what she considered so vulgar an attempt to joke. "The lady who now occupies the Grange brought it with her!"

The gentleman in the brown wig could have told her as much.

"It contains nothing but a parcel of old account-books," continued the speaker, "in blue, grocer-like covers; and an old black dress and shawl which not a housemaid here would condescend to wear!"

He remembered the dress of poor Martha.

"Well," he said, musingly, "it is a singular old place! I should not much like to visit it at night: I should expect to see some of these stately old lords and ladies," he added, pointing to the portraits upon the walls, "walk out of their frames and dance a minuet!"

"*No one ever does visit it at night!*" replied Mrs. Everett; "the servants are all too much afraid, and the family apartments are on the other side of the mansion!"

This was important information, and her hearer noted it accordingly.

After running through the rest of the rooms, her visitor took his leave, charged with many kind messages and regards to Farmer Rudge, whose name had served him as a passport.

In his way home he pondered over all that he had seen and heard—and it must be confessed that he had food for meditation. The portrait puzzled him the most; as for the cabinet, there was nothing so very extraordinary in his finding it.

Suddenly he recollected the fragments of the burnt letter which he had discovered in the captain's room, and given to Martha Quin.

"'Tis he!" he exclaimed; "her wit was quicker than mine! ——ly Grange! Brierly Grange! He, then, is the owner of this large estate—this noble old house and fine title! I always thought he was a gentleman! He the owner of them!" he added, with great deliberation. "*We* are the owners of them—old Quin's death made us partners!"

With these words, he hastened his steps towards the little public-house where for the last few days he had taken up his abode, to arrange his plans for the coming night.

"Could I but secure the papers of old

Quin," he thought, "I might bid defiance to his grand-daughter!"

As he quitted the wood, close by the park-gate, he encountered Clement Foster: the young man had his gun upon his arm, and was followed by the keeper and two dogs.

Miles touched his hat respectfully.

"Who is that person?" inquired Clement of his companion—for, despite the very respectable appearance of the stranger, he had been struck by the sinister expression of his countenance.

"Can't say, sir!" replied the keeper; "a new comer-comer in these parts—from London, I believe. He is after some farm, I hear, in the neighborhood!"

"He does not look much like a farmer!" observed the gentleman.

"A great deal more like a housebreaker!" added the former, "or a highwayman! I wonder what he wants on the plantation?"

Clement Foster wondered, too, but the affair made merely a momentary impression: he had quite forgotten it by the time he reached the house; not so the keeper, who determined to have an eye upon him.

The evening was passed by the two ladies and their guest—although the lawyer's son was almost as much at home as they were—in the usual way—music and reading: it gave Miss Wyndham an opportunity of laying close siege to the heart she had determined to conquer—for she began to suspect that in the event of Miss Mendez not discovering the child of her adoption, his father's fortune was not the only one he would inherit: the quiet kindness of Clement had made a deeper impression in his favor than all her affected sensibility and devotion.

Martha was more clear-sighted than she had given her credit for, and had seen through them.

"Do you believe in presentiments?" said the latter, as they rose to separate for the night.

As a matter of course, the governess did.

"I have a strong impression that something serious is about to occur!" continued the mistress of the house.

"And I have an impression," replied Clement, "that I shall have rare sport tomorrow, and bring you home the deer which George, the keeper, saw struggling through the covert this morning! I have been after him all day—a ball in each barrel!"

Miss Wyndham gave one of those pretty little starts which young ladies of a certain age indulge in when they wish to appear interesting. It was followed by just the faintest scream imaginable—for the speaker held the weapon in his hand: it had been in the drawing-room all the evening.

"Be careful, my dear Clem!" said Martha, "for your father's sake! You are his only child, and I know what it is to be deprived of such a tie! Should anything occur ——"

"Dreadful!" said her companion, squeezing out a tear.

"You are very careful of me!" replied the youth; "much more so than I deserve! My own dear, good mother could not be more kind! But of course," he added, fearful that the comparison was not altogether a complimentary one, "you are much younger than she is!"

The governess repressed her inclination to smile—for she had begun to feel jealous of the evident interest which the speakers took in each other: sometimes she imagined that it was love—and, preposterous as was the idea, it tormented her.

She little knew the hearts of either. Clement Foster's had not yet spoken—at least in the sense she suspected; and as for Martha's, all that she was ever destined to feel of affection was for her lost child.

"The very best person you could have compared me to!" observed the lady, smiling at his embarrassment; "for I am too old to be compared even to a sister! Good night, my dear boy!" she added, extending her hand; "and take your gun with you!"

The "Good night" was repeated, and all three retired to their separate rooms.

Somehow, Clement, despite the fatigue of the day, could not sleep. The recollection of the stranger he had met in the plantation, and the observation of the keeper, returned to him.

"What folly!" he said; "Miss Mendez has resided here for years—is beloved by all the country round, for her charity and virtue! What! danger? Pah! This old place has set me dreaming!"

The chamber of the speaker was situated in the north wing of the house, directly over the porch. The picture-gallery and the great drawing-room—now scarcely ever used—separated it from the south wing, where the rooms of Martha, the governess, and most of the servants were situated. Just as he was on the point of falling into his first sleep, there came a rattling noise, as if a handful of gravel had been thrown up at the window.

He started and listened.

"It can't be morning!" he said.

The noise was repeated. It was the signal by which the keeper was in the habit of waking him, without disturbing the rest of the family.

Clement rose from the bed, and opened the casement.

"Is that you, sir?" demanded a voice from below.

"Yes! Who asks!"

"George!"

"And what the deuce, George, do you want at this hour of the night? Any poachers about?"

"Worse, I fear, sir!"

"Worse!" repeated the youth, and his thoughts involuntarily reverted to the stranger he had met in the grounds.

"The man—you know who I mean—has left the little inn where he lodged! Bryant, the shepherd, saw him enter the parks more than an hour since! I have hunted through the plantations, and can't find him! He must be in the house!"

"Impossible!"

"Did you pass through the picture-gallery, sir?" demanded the keeper.

"When?"

"Half an hour since!"

"No! I have been in bed double the time you name!"

"I'll swear I saw a light there!" continued the man; "though only for an instant!"

One of the dogs—for both the pointers were in the room—gave a low growl. A faint scream was heard in a distant part of the house. The animals began to bark furiously.

Clement Foster doubted no longer that some danger threatened the inmates of the Grange. Catching up his gun, he threw open the door of his room, and hastened towards the picture-gallery—both the animals, now thoroughly excited, preceding him.

On entering the gallery, he saw, by the expiring light of a lamp which had been overturned, two persons struggling, and recognised the voice of Martha calling for assistance.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he fired. One of them fell, but *which*, in the darkness which followed—for the lamp was extinguished—he could not tell.

"Martha! Miss Mendez!" he exclaimed: "for God's sake, speak to me. Are you safe?"

A deep groan was the only response.

In his despair, poor Clement felt disposed to turn the remaining barrel against himself.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

But be not long---for in the tedious minutes---
Exquisite interval---I'm on the rack;
For sure the greatest evil man can know
Bears no proportion to this dread suspense.

FROWDE.

FORTUNATELY for Clement Foster, the report of the gun had alarmed the servants, who, half-dressed, came hurrying into the gallery, terror and surprise marked upon each countenance. We say fortunately—for although all danger appeared past, the suspense, the doubt whether Miss Mendez or the robber had received the ball, amounted to agony.

When, by the lights which the domestics brought, he saw the body of a man weltering in a pool of blood, stretched before the cabinet, and Martha fainting in a chair, the change from despair to joy was almost too much for him. A deep-drawn sigh broke the horrible spell which bound his faculties; he rushed to her side, and clasping her hand in his, burst into a flood of tears.

Do not smile, gentle readers—he was only seventeen. His heart retained all its early feelings, its impulses, its generous sympathies. The world, with its hard lessons and cold experience, had not effaced the character which nature gave it; it was still fresh and pure as when she stamped her impress on her work, and pronounced it human.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, fervently, at the same time raising her hand to his lips; "had the bullet reached her, I should never have known a peaceful hour again!"

A loud scream from the female servants caused the youth to start from his knees and seize his gun—the figure of a man was seen at the extreme end of the gallery.

"All right, sir!" said the well-known voice of the keeper; the faithful fellow, on seeing the young gentleman disappear from the window, and hearing the shot, had climbed the porch and made his way into the house.

"George! It's George!" exclaimed the females, in a tone which showed how much they felt relieved by the discovery.

"I heard a shot!" observed the keeper.

With a feeling of terror which he could not repress, Clement Foster pointed to the body of the house-breaker.

"Don't touch him!" screamed the housekeeper, as the young man stooped to raise the wounded ruffian; "perhaps he is only pretending to be dead! We shall all be murdered!"

The housemaids and cook huddled together, as if for mutual protection.

"He is not dead!" said George, who had turned the body over and placed his head upon the chest; but I don't think he can have very long to live—his breathing is so hard! Capital shot, sir!" he added; clean through the chest!"

Miss Wyndham, who had been prudently listening at the door of the apartment till perfectly satisfied that all danger was over,

now rushed into the gallery, calling frantically upon the servants to protect their dear, kind mistress.

Clement assured her that Miss Mendez was not hurt; but it was some time before the young lady chose to be persuaded that such was really the case. The opportunity for displaying her affection, her disinterested love for the rich tenant of the Grange was too favorable a one to be lost; throwing herself upon her knees by the side of the chair in which Martha was gradually recovering consciousness, she implored her to revive, to look up, for the sake of the orphan—meaning herself—who had no other friend on earth to love or live for.

The cook, whose attachment to her mistress was far less romantic, but much more practical, left the room to get a glass of water.

"Take her to her chamber!" said Miss Wyndham. "Gently—oh, gently!"

"Thank you!" interrupted Martha, speaking for the first time, though very faintly; "but I am better—much better! Who—where is my preserver?"

Her eyes fell upon Clement, who, pale as death, with his hand still resting on his gun, was standing near her.

"Brave boy!" she continued, at the same time attempting to smile; "I owe my life to your gallantry and courage! I shall never be able to repay my debt of gratitude!"

"Repay me!" repeated the youth; "*you live*—that is sufficient recompense! If you knew the agony, the suspense I endured after I had fired, till the servants came with lights, and I saw that you were safe—that I had not killed the kindest, best of friends—you would not talk of repayment or gratitude! It is I who ought to feel grateful! Let me persuade you to retire," he continued; "this scene is not suited to women—scarcely to men—if I may venture to deem myself one!"

The glance of admiration from Miss Wyndham which followed this speech—certainly a very modest one—from the hero of the night's adventure, might have convinced him, had he noticed it, that in her estimation, at least, he was entitled to the appellation.

"No!" said Martha, who had gradually recovered some portion of her usual firmness; "my task is not ended yet! Does the wretch—the man, I mean—still live?"

"He does, madam!" replied the keeper, who had raised the body of Miles from the floor, and placed it upon one of the sofas; "but in my opinion he can't last long—he is bleeding internally!"

"Is he past speaking?"

"No! the fellow appears sensible enough!" With a self-*possession* which astonished those around her, the mistress of Brierly Grange grave orders to send at once for surgical assistance, and also to request the presence of the Reverend William Rede, the nearest magistrate.

Having issued her orders, she took a light from the hand of one of the servants, and advanced towards the sofa on which the keeper had placed the wounded ruffian. Their eyes met, and they gazed on each other for several moments in silence. The features of Martha were paler even than those of the dying man, but her dark eyes flashed with unusual brillancy.

"It is all over with me!" said Miles, speaking with difficulty—for the accumulation of blood upon his chest began to impede his utterance; "I am riddled clean through and through—by a mere boy, too! Had it been done by a man," he added, with bitterness, I shouldn't so much have minded it! But a greenhorn like that—whose neck I could have wrung—twisted!"

"It is indeed the end of a long career of crime!" replied the woman; "the patience of heaven has exhausted itself at at last! You were warned—and warned in vain! Nothing, however, could reach that flinty heart!"

"The bullet has reached it! Curse him—curse him!" muttered the ruffian.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Everett, the housekeeper, recognising at last the voice and face of the speaker; "if it is not Farmer Rudge's friend! Well! who could have supposed such a respectable-looking man was only a housebreaker?"

Her mistress motioned her to be silent.

"Miles," she said, addressing him by name, "your sufferings, like your crimes, in this world will soon be over! But there is another state—you have escaped an earthly judge, to meet your Heavenly one! Think, ere it is too late! Make some atonement! Tell me—my child! You know the question I would ask! Confess——"

"Confess!" interrupted the fellow, impatiently, "Bah! What should I confess for? What good will that do me?"

"Implore for mercy!" replied Martha.

"Mercy!" he repeated, with a scornful laugh; "there is no mercy for me! I would have been honest once, but the mercy of the world compelled me to be a rogue, or starve! No sooner was I out of the clutches of the old devil, your grandfather, than I fell into yours! I tried to release myself—and—here I am! Bet and her children may go to the *workus* now!"

"No!" eagerly answered the mistress of the Grange, struck with the hope of having at last discovered the means to soften his ferocious nature; "deeply as you have wronged me, I promise you not only to pro-

tect your wife, but to assist your children —to give them the means of earning honest bread! Only relieve my tortured mind of the doubt which oppresses it!"

Although Miles remained obstinately silent, it was evident that her words had made some impression upon him—for he appeared buried in reflection.

The surgeon and the magistrate at last arrived. Whilst the former was examining the wound of the housebreaker, the latter retired with Martha and Clement to the library, to take their declaration of the extraordinary circumstances which had occurred.

The Reverend William Rede was one of those correct, methodical gentlemen, of whom society speaks well—on the principle, perhaps, that mediocrity excites neither jealousy nor offence. As a magistrate, without being exceedingly active, he did his duty—inspired a wholesome terror in all vagrants who were brought before him, and never sentenced an unfortunate beggar to a month's confinement for asking bread, without prefacing his judgment by recommending him on his release to seek an honest means of existence.

"Very shocking affair, Miss Mendez!" he observed, as soon as they were seated; "pray tell me how it occurred? The hope of plunder, no doubt—instead of working honestly for his bread!"

"I do not think," replied Martha, "that plunder was his only object!"

"Shocking—shocking!" observed the gentleman.

"His object," continued the lady, "was doubtless to obtain possession of certain papers which placed his liberty, if not his life, at my mercy!"

The magistrate began to appear interested.

"You know the man, then?"

"Yes!"

"Shall I retire, Miss Mendez?" said Clement Foster; "I can state my share in this unfortunate affair when you have concluded!"

He rose, as if with the intention of quitting the room, and Miss Wyndham, whose curiosity was excited to the highest pitch, was obliged, for appearance sake, to follow his example.

"I shall never have such another opportunity of learning her secret!" she thought, spitefully, to herself.

"Stay, my dear boy!" replied Martha; "I have nothing to conceal from you!"

Clement and the young lady both resumed their seats; the latter with an air of satisfaction which she tried in vain to disguise.

"*You suspect truly, sir!*" continued the speaker. "I know the man—remember him from childhood! He was my grandfather's agent in many a dark transaction which would not bear the light! I have sometimes thought that he was employed by him to deprive me of a child which I adopted, whose love was as dear to me as if she had been my own! Since the death of my relative I have employed this ruffian in the hitherto fruitless attempt to discover her! He was in my power! Now you know the tie between us!"

"Was it a female child?" inquired the magistrate, vainly attempting to conceal the surprise or interest which he felt.

"It was!"

"And her name?"

"Fanny."

"One word more, Miss Mendez," said the reverend gentleman, "and I have done! the name of the wretched man?"

"Miles!" replied Martha, who felt convinced, from the agitation of the speaker, that he had more than the ordinary motive suggested by his official duty for the inquiry.

"How singular! How very singular!" exclaimed the Reverend William Rede. "It is not quite a year since I saw the child you name!"

"Saw her?" repeated the mistress of the Grange. "Where? For heaven's sake, tell me where? Do not trifle with my feelings, I implore you! How looked she? Was she well? Did she speak of me, or has she forgotten the friend, the mother that loved her?"

Her violent agitation, the look of anguish which accompanied her words, the tears which impeded them, touched the feelings of the cold and heartless man of the world. For once he permitted his heart to be softened. To be sure, the luxury promised to be an inexpensive one. As to his relationship to the wife of the poor harlequin—for he was no other than the brother of Madame Du Bast—a few moments consideration convinced him that he need not avow it.

"I was in London at the time," he said, speaking with great deliberation, as if weighing every word before he uttered it, "engaged in a work of charity, to which my ministry and a slight knowledge of the family of the unfortunate person whom I visited called me. After her death, I discovered that a child named Fanny had been rescued from death by her husband, and adopted by him under circumstances which convince me it must have been the same! I have the statement drawn up by the man before he died, the handkerchief with which the hands of the little victim were bound, the clothes she wore at the time."

"A dark camlet frock?" eagerly inter-

rupted Martha, grasping his hand in her excitement.

"Yes, I think—nay I am sure it was!"

"And they would have murdered her! Oh, pitiless—pitiless! Where is she? Where am I to seek her? Benevolence like yours could not have abandoned her to the mercy of the world! Generous man—amply—amply will I repay you!"

The reverend gentleman silently winced under the commendations which conscience whispered him he had so ill merited. Bitterly did he regret that he had not acted a more generous part by the friendless orphan.

"I intrusted a sum of money to a friend of my late—of her late protectress," he replied; "a very respectable young person—that is, considering her station in life. They had been much together, and could not endure the thoughts of parting. It will not be difficult to trace her!"

A sigh of bitter disappointment was the only commentary with which the granddaughter of Peter Quin answered his statement.

"But the statement of the circumstances under which she was found—the clothes and handkerchief—are still in my possession!"

Warmly did Clement Foster congratulate Miss Mendez on the certainty of recovering her lost treasure, and offered his services to proceed instantly to London, to consult his father, and prosecute any inquiries she wished to make. Miss Wyndham, with far less sincerity, expressed her joy on the occasion.

Martha could only press his hand in token of her gratitude.

"Softly, young gentleman!" said the magistrate with a smile; "you forget that your evidence will be necessary in the examination which I am about to take! I cannot part with you yet! You have acted very nobly—most courageously—especially for one so young; but although I and your friends are perfectly aware of it, the public must be made acquainted with it as well! The man may die!"

"Well, sir?" replied the youth.

"In which case there must be an inquest! The verdict will be 'Justifiable homicide,' of course; but till the result is known, you cannot quit Bricrly Grange!"

"Write for your father, Clement!" said Miss Mendez; "his clear head and ready judgment will be invaluable at such a moment!"

There was a gentle tap at the door of the apartment. Mrs. Everett came to inform the magistrate that the surgeon wished to see him. A message was sent back for him to join them in the library.

When Dr. Marsh made his appearance, he announced that the wounded man had but a few hours to live, and added, "that it had never been his lot to encounter a more hardened wretch. His curses," he said, "were fearful."

"I will see him!" exclaimed the clergyman; "it is my duty, in my double capacity of magistrate and minister of religion! My exhortations may awaken him, perhaps, to a sense of his awful state! To be called to his account in the commission of crime so suddenly—so unprepared!"

Although the confession of Miles was now a matter comparatively of little importance—since the clue to the discovery of Fanny had been obtained through the speaker—still Martha felt most anxious that he should succeed. She thought of her grandfather, and shuddered at the idea of another guilty creature being summoned to the judgment-seat.

"Assure him of my forgiveness!" she said; "and that his wife and children shall be cared for!"

When the Reverend William Rede returned to the picture-gallery, he perceived at a glance that the prediction of the surgeon was soon to be accomplished—death was in every look of the wounded man. The lines in his hard features had become more rigid; his eyes already wore that peculiar glassy appearance which denotes the near approach of the King of Terrors. He breathed at intervals, but with great difficulty: the blood which had accumulated in his chest was gradually choking him.

The minister of peace shuddered at the look of mingled hate and defiance with which he received him.

"How do you feel?" he asked in a tone which was intended to convey compassion.

"Ugh—ugh! How the devil should I feel?" muttered Miles, pausing to gather strength between every word. "I'm done for—done for!"

"God has been merciful!" observed the reverend gentleman.

"Ugh! Has he? Fine mercy!"

"He has left you time for repentance—for atonement!" continued his visitor. "Let me entreat you to use the brief space accorded you!"

"Ugh! That's what the judges say when—ugh!—when they hang a fellow!" interrupted Miles. "I've known 'em cry, too—seen their tears—and yet—ugh!—they will dine off venison and turtle an hour afterwards! Humbug—all humbug! I ain't going to confess!" he added, fiercely. "What I've done I've done! My secret dies with me—that's one satisfac—ugh!—tion!"

"It's a poor one!" observed the clergyman.

"All that's left me!"

"But it is not left you!" said the gentleman. "With all his wisdom, man is but a man in the sight of his Maker! He needs not the confession of the sinner to bring his deeds to light! Conceal them as he may, a hand Divine rends the dark veil aside, and all is clear! Before it is too late, repent, and make atonement!"

"Martha sent you!" groaned the ruffian, not in the least moved by the exhortations of the speaker, whose cold and unimpassioned tones but ill accorded with his words. "Ugh! I know she thinks to wheedle me—but it won't do—ugh!—it won't do, I say!"

"Impious!" exclaimed the clergyman; "remember that heaven hears you!"

"Let it!"

"That it saw you," continued the monitor, assuming a stern tone, which was far more in accordance with his character than the accents of mercy, "when you dragged the child from its home! Its eye was on you when you led it to the river side—tied its innocent hands *with the coarse chequered handkerchief*—and prepared to plunge it in the waters which ran murmuring at your feet!"

As he proceeded, the eyes of Miles became distended with surprise and terror. Like most men who, during a life of crime, mock at religion, he was inclined to be superstitious, and the description of the manner in which he had attempted to carry out the instructions of his employer appeared like a supernatural revelation.

"A lie!" he shouted, with a violent effort; "a lie!"

"A truth!" said the minister of religion; "an awful truth! Whilst its eye was upon you, its hand was outstretched to save the innocent victim of your cruelty! You were baffled at the very moment of your crime!"

Miles uttered a deep groan.

"It baffled you again!"

"I know—I know!" interrupted the terrified wretch, whose fears were now completely awakened by what he considered the supernatural knowledge of his crimes. "Send for Martha! I will confess everything—everything!"

"I am the proper person to——"

"To her—ugh!—to her alone!" exclaimed the dying man, impatiently. "She promised to—to do something for Bet and—ugh!—the—the kids! She doesn't know all yet—that I and—ugh—ugh!"

The violent fit of coughing, followed by the oozing of blood from his lips, convinced the reverend gentleman that there was no time to lose. He rang the bell, and desired the servant who answered it to inform Miss Mendez that the housebreaker entreated to see her.

"Alone!" added Miles; "alone! Tell her that I am repentant—yes, repentant—that's the word! I won't harm her! I could not wring the neck of a baby now!" he continued, in a tone of mingled regret and resignation.

The Reverend William Rede looked at his penitent very seriously: perhaps he began to think that it was quite as well the gentleman did not possess the strength whose loss he lamented so pathetically—for his glances more than once had betrayed anything but a friendly disposition towards himself.

When Martha heard the request of the dying man, without the least hesitation she resolved to comply with it, although she partly guessed the terrible secret he had to confide to her: she alone had entertained a doubt that the death of Peter Quin was the work of his own hands.

It was in vain that Clement Foster and Miss Wyndham offered to accompany her. Their presence, much to the mortification of the latter, was kindly but firmly declined.

"I have nothing to fear!" she said; "he is past injuring me!"

Notwithstanding this assurance, Clement determined to take his stand at the door of the picture gallery, so as to be within call should the ruffian really attempt to injure her.

As soon as Miles beheld the granddaughter of his victim, he motioned her to take a seat.

"Sit down, Martha!" he said, in a hoarse voice; "I have a great deal to tell, and but a short time to tell it in!"

The woman mechanically obeyed him.

He proceeded, as rapidly as his cough would permit, to relate the orders he had received from Peter Quin relative to the disposal of Fanny; how the plot was entirely of his own concocting, and the means by which it had been carried out: all of this our readers are already aware of.

"Cruel—cruel!" said his horror-struck listener; "so young—so innocent!"

"*Wer'n't* he cruel?" said the dying felon. "That it worn't my fault you *know*—I wor forced to do his bidding!"

"The wretched man!"

"He wor a wretch!" observed Miles, who appeared to find some excuse for his own villany in abusing his ancient employer; "and he deserved hanging for it! It wor no crime to hang him—wor it, Martha?"

"I am not his judge!" answered the woman, turning very pale—for she saw in the fixed, eager gaze of the speaker the importance he attached to her opinion.

"Well, well!" he muttered; "nor I, for the matter o' that! But, judge or no judge, I did it!"

"Monster!"

"I and the captain! He pushed us hard, threatened to hang us both; and you know he could a' done it! It's a dangerous thing," he added, slowly, as if weighing every word he uttered, "to have the power of hanging people!"

Doubtless the dying man considered his second attempt to carry off Fanny in the light of a meritorious action rather than otherwise—since he made no allusion to it; and Martha, trusting to the clue she had obtained from the clergyman, forbore to question him upon the point.

"You can hang him," he said speaking of the captain, "when I am dead: and if you are wise, *you will!* Fine house—broad lands—all his! Only to think how things do turn out! I always said he was one of the nobs! Hang him, Martha—hang him!"

His cough returned with increased violence: the mistress of the Grange hastily summoned the surgeon—but human skill was useless—the wretched being expired muttering something about "Bet and the kids"—proving that even in the most depraved natures some link remains to show they once were human.

The account which he had given of the murder of Peter Quin remained a secret between Martha and the dead.

At a late hour on the following day, Mr. Foster, who had been sent for, arrived from London, and was present at the inquest held upon the body of Miles; the verdict, as the Reverend William Rede had predicted, was "Justifiable homicide."

Great was the delight of Miss Wyndham, and the astonishment of the steward, when Miss Mendez announced her intention of giving up Brierly Grange, and residing for the future in London; even Clement did not regret the change: he felt happy to quit the place in which he had taken the life of a fellow-creature.

"Of course, Miss Mendez," said the steward, "I can only write to Sir John and inform him of your intention; but permit me to observe how highly improbable it is that he should consent to cancel the lease!"

Martha did not think so.

"It has four more years to run!" added the old man, who knew how much his master was pressed for money; "surely you will offer some compromise?"

"Not a shilling!" replied the lady, firmly.

"But what reason am I to give? It is not his fault that people break into the house and get shot!"

"Tell him," she said, "that the name of the housebreaker was Miles!"

The steward looked as if he could not comprehend how the name of the thief could affect the point at issue.

"And that mine," continued the speaker, "before the death of my grandfather caused me to change it, was Martha Quin! You can forward me his reply through Mr. Foster."

The steward did as he was directed, and in less than a month the lease was returned cancelled from Florence—where the baronet then resided—and it was once more announced in the papers that Briérly Grange was to let for a term of years.

"Sir John has behaved handsomely—very handsomely!" observed the lawyer, as he read the letter announcing the arrangement to her.

His client made no reply, but smiled bitterly.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

He knew not there were hearts whose nerves
Like tempered steel, bend with the blast;
Hearts which outrage only serves
To strengthen when the storm is passed.
FATE OF GENIUS.

Miss Mellon watched with painful interest—we might add, with surprise—the extraordinary change which a few months wrought in the character of Madame Garrachi. She seldom spoke of her son—never of her husband—yet it was evident to her friend that the recollection of both was seldom absent from her memory and heart. All her attention was now devoted to Fanny, who seemed to occupy the vacant place in her affections; and yet she seldom caressed the child, or betrayed, by any of those spontaneous endearments, the feelings with which it was evident she regarded her. The best masters that money could procure were engaged for the hitherto neglected orphan, who commenced at the same time to study both French and Italian; her own language was comparatively neglected; dancing, deportment, nothing that could tend to render her accomplished and graceful, was forgotten. As for music, her protectress was her instructor; had she been the daughter of a prince, she could not have had a more accomplished one; and nobly did the efforts of the gifted child reward her devotion and patience.

Madame Garrachi at length resolved to quit England with her pupil; and shortly afterwards a circumstance occurred which hastened the execution of her project.

Sally and her lover, together with Mrs. Watkins, were weekly visitors at the cottage: all three were delighted at the brilliant education which the late *prima donna* was bestowing upon their favorite, whose

pale cheek flushed with joy when she beheld them—it was the only day of recreation permitted her.

Sally had lately observed to her companions, after the conclusion of these visits, that Fanny was getting dreadfully thin. The young painter had noticed it, too, although he did not dare to avow it, for fear of giving her pain.

On one of these occasions the little party had been invited to spend the afternoon at the lodge by Miss Mellon, who offered to send them home in her carriage—much to the annoyance of Mrs. Watkins, who, with all her good nature could not endure the thought of being patronised by an actress who had held only a secondary rank in the theatre. Had it been Mrs. Siddons, she would have estimated the honor very differently.

After having played and sung to her visitors—who, as a matter of course, were astonished at her progress—Fanny and her sister—for so she invariably called the dancer—were permitted to stroll by themselves in the grounds.

"Keep to the walks, my loves!" said the good-natured mistress of the place; "you will find the grass damp!"

"Oh, never fear!" replied the light-hearted girls.

"*Think of your voice!*" added Madame Garrachi, addressing her pupil, as she disappeared through one of the French windows which opened on the lawn.

The words had no sooner escaped her lips than her conscience smote her for having uttered them. She remembered the time when the same warning expression had inflicted such exquisite pain upon her own heart. Unable to conceal her emotion, she hastily left the room.

"Is madame ill?" demanded Barry, who had been a devoted though humble admirer of her genius.

"Do not notice her!" replied his hostess; "some chord which we cannot perceive has been struck. She has suffered much."

"It is the fate of genius!" observed the painter; "the keener our susceptibilities and appreciation of all that is beautiful in art or nature, the more bitter are our disappointments!"

Miss Mellon threw herself back in the luxuriously cushioned Voltaire in which she was sitting, and regarded him for an instant in silence.

"You are an artist?" she said.

"That he is!" replied Mrs. Watkins, replying for him; "in every sense of the word—feeling, color, touch! I wish you *could see the portraits* he painted of me *and Fanny—character* portraits—as the Duchess of York and the young Prince Edward! But my poor mansion," she added, "is too humble to be honored by such a visit!"

"Honored!" repeated the wealthy actress; "not in the least! I remember the time when a smile from you was a condescension—as it is still!" she continued, with exquisite grace—for with all her whims and oddities, she sincerely respected her venerable but less fortunate comrade in the theatre.

From that moment Mrs. Watkins felt reconciled to being *sent home* in Miss Mellon's carriage.

"You shall paint my portrait!" said the mistress of Holly Lodge; "that is, on one condition!"

"On any!" replied the artist, gallantly.

"That you do not permit any one to see it!" continued the lady. "A dear and valued friend has long wished to possess it—and I intend it as a surprise! Only to think of poor little me," she exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Watkins, "whom, a few years since, no one cared to notice, patronising art—ordering my portrait! Who knows but I may arrive at the honor of being engraved, in time!"

"If goodness and beauty can merit such homage, you are sure to receive it!" observed Barry.

Miss Mellon replied by a joyous laugh, and the subject dropped. Here it may be well to add, that the portrait was painted, and her *unknown friend*, to whom the fair original presented it, was so delighted with the gift, that he sent the artist no less a sum than one hundred pounds: the painter thought his fortune was made.

On leaving the drawing room, Madame Garrachi sought the garden: she could give vent to the feelings which oppressed her there. So sensitive had she become, that like the stricken deer, she loved to indulge in solitude: even the voice and tear of sympathy oppressed her.

"Selfish!" she murmured; "I have become as cold and selfish as the being I despise! What a lesson! The very words, too! Oh, how few can watch the weeds and uproot them as they grow within the heart! I have made the devotion of this poor child subservient to my passion—my revenge—reckless of the future! I will atone for my error," she added, "and repay her patient sweetness with a mother's love!"

Feeling too much agitated to return to the house, she continued her walk in the grounds. The evening air blew freshly, and the healthful breeze cooled her throbbing brain. Just as she had mastered her emotion and was about to return to the villa, the sound of voices struck her.

Sally and Fanny were conversing in one of the shrubberies.

Impelled by a curiosity she could not resist, she cautiously approached. The first words she heard rivited her attention.

"It was the same gentleman, I am sure," said the dancer, "who, when your dear mamma died, paid for the funeral, and gave the five guineas for you! He said that he had discovered your family, and that, in a few days, a lady—a real lady, rich and good—your own mamma—would claim you!"

The child looked at her doubtfully: she remembered the two separate attempts that had been made upon her liberty and life. She feared that the fine promises of the stranger concealed some new danger.

"What are you thinking of, Fanny?" continued the speaker.

"My mamma was good," replied the orphan; "but she was poor! Young as I was when they tore me from her, I remember our solitary home—its poverty and misery! I think I see her now," she added, "with her dark, sad eyes, as she used to gaze upon me, and call me her only treasure! It cannot be my mamma!"

"Perhaps she has become rich?" observed her companion.

The child shook her head doubtingly. She remembered the cold, unsympathising manner of the brother of Madame Du Bast, and had no confidence in any change of fortune of which he was the herald.

"What motive can he have?"

"I don't know!" exclaimed the orphan; "I cannot suppose a reason why cruel men should seek my life—and yet they have done so! Sally—dear Sally," she added, throwing her arms round the neck of the dancer, "do not—for pity's sake, do not tell him where I am! They will kill me—I am sure they will! Have you told Mrs. Watkins?"

"No!"

"Barry?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the girl; "I have no secrets from him! You know we are to be married soon! He cannot endure that I should appear in public! He is earning a great deal of money! You are to live with us then, and we shall be happy—oh, so happy!"

The orphan gently laid her head upon her shoulder, and wept in silence. Her adopted sister started as she felt the warm tears of the desolate little creature trickling down her neck.

"Are you now happy, now?" she asked.

"I was happier with you!" replied the child; "for you loved me!"

"And does not madame?"

"She is kind to me—very kind to me! But her love is not like yours! I have fine clothes—but I hate them; masters—they weary me! I would rather have a kiss or a kind word from you and our dear old landlady, than all the new frocks and lessons in the world!"

"But does madame never kiss you?" demanded Sally, who could not comprehend why so much bounty should be lavished without a corresponding amount of affection.

"She praises me!"

The reply drew tears into the eyes of the listener. She felt that her purpose, whatever it might be, would be defeated, unless she contrived to interest the heart of her pupil in the task to which she had devoted her—and from that moment resolved to change her conduct towards her; the extreme sensitiveness which rendered Fanny so susceptible of coldness or kindness might else defeat her object.

Unobserved by the children—for Fanny was little more than a child—she hastily withdrew. Her mind was up. She at once determined to fly from England, and bear her pupil with her.

Barry soon afterwards joined the speakers in the garden. Miss Mellon had sent him to seek them. Again the visit of the stranger, his conversation with Sally, and the fine promises he had held out were discussed. It was agreed that in the event of his making a second visit, she should refer him to Mrs. Watkins and the painter.

"You can trust to our prudence!" said the young man; "for affection is ever cautious! Besides, we will call the poor blind lieutenant, who is always asking after you, into our councils! We shall soon be able to judge whether he means honestly or not by you!"

With this understanding they returned to the house, and shortly afterwards took their leave for town in the carriage of Miss Mellon.

The same evening, when Fanny, as usual, offered her pale cheek to the kiss of Madame Garrachi—as she bade her "Good night," the unhappy woman caught her in her arms, and drew her gently towards her.

"I must speak with you, Fanny!" she said; "you are young—very young; but I think you will understand me!"

Her pupil regarded her with surprise; she had a grateful as well as sensitive nature, and feared she had offended her.

"Are you angry?" she asked.

"Angry!" repeated madame; "and with you—whose patient sweetness might disarm even merited reproach! No, Fanny—no! I have been to blame! A heart like yours requires more than fine clothes!"

The child looked up in her face, and quietly smiled.

"You love Sally?" continued the speaker.

"Dearly, madame!"

"Dearer than I did Feliz?" demanded the lady. "Should you lose her, it would be long—very long—before another supplied her place!"

At the name of her former playfellow, the eyes of Fanny filled with tears.

"You will fill it!" observed the singer with a sigh; "be dear to me as he was! My only hope of peace in this world depends on you! I would see you happy, brilliant, and admired as I once was! Do you comprehend me?"

Young as she was, her pupil did comprehend her; not the purpose which the speaker had in view—but that the wound she had received was too recent to admit another to supply the place of her lost boy.

"I have been thoughtless—very thoughtless!" she murmured; "but it is so sweet to feel that we are loved!"

"You are, Fanny!" exclaimed madame; "you are beloved! We will quit this place! You shall have companions of your own age—the bloom will return to your cheeks—mirth to your sad eyes! I have been selfish in my sorrow—but I did not intend to be unkind! I have another motive for leaving here!" she added, thoughtfully; "circumstances have convinced me that your enemies have not yet abandoned their designs upon you—nay, do not look so terrified—my affection shall guard you and defeat their projects!"

This was said in order to prepare Fanny for the flight she meditated; it accorded but too well with her own terrors and the information she had received from Sally.

"Yes—let us go!" she eagerly answered; "let us leave this place!"

"You will accompany me, then?" exclaimed Madame Garrachi, in a tone of triumph.

"Anywhere with you," was the reply, "if you will only love me!"

The very next day, the late *prima donna* of His Majesty's Theatre began to make arrangements for her departure, which she announced to Miss Mellon, who felt both surprised and hurt at a resolution which she was powerless to oppose. The preparations were soon made, and in less than a week the unhappy woman embarked with her *protegée* on board a packet for Holland—the only route, in consequence of the war, open to the continent.

Fanny was delighted with the change, which her protectress described as a mere *jaunt of pleasure*. She would willingly *have taken leave of* Sally and her kind friends in St. Martin's Court, but was too timid to insist upon the arrangement.

"A few days," she thought, "would soon pass!" Little did she imagine the space of time that would elapse before she saw them again.

As the shores of England faded from her view, the heart of the gifted Frenchwoman bounded with triumph; it seemed as if the most difficult part of her task was achieved. Her plan of vengeance was laid, and the instrument in her hand.

On the very morning of their departure a carriage, with Miss Mendez, the Reverend William Rede, and Mr. Foster, drove up to the entrance of St. Martin's Court, and all three directed their steps to the house of Mrs. Watkins. Unable to extort from the friends of Fanny the clue to her retreat, he had at last stated in full everything to the lawyer—and the visit was at once decided upon.

"I shall see her at last!" thought Martha; "hold her in my arms—hear her voice—embrace my long-lost treasure! They cannot dispute my claim!"

No sooner had the clergyman and Mr. Foster explained to the aged actress the motive which brought them, than the affection of the old lady took the alarm. She desired Meg, who eyed the strangers most suspiciously, to request the presence of her lodgers for a few minutes. All the inmates of the house, not excepting the German and his wife, were assembled in the little parlor.

Sally at once recognised Mr. Rede as the gentleman who had assisted at the deathbed of Madame Du Bast, and related everything which had passed; his paying for the funeral, his gift of five guineas to provide for the future wants of Fanny, and his late visit to her at the theatre.

"And here," said the reverend gentleman, "is the statement drawn up by Signor Du Bast, relating how he became possessed of the child!"

He handed it to Mr. Foster, who read it to the horror-struck friends of the poor orphan.

When he concluded, the blind lieutenant was the first to speak.

"The statement we have just heard," he said, "proves the benevolence of this gentleman, and the danger from which the innocent object of so much persevering cruelty was happily rescued; but I cannot perceive the link in the chain of evidence which proves the right of this lady to call herself her mother!"

"Let me see her!" exclaimed Martha. "She will recognise me! I only ask to see her in your presence! The mere sound of my voice will be sufficient: she

has not forgotten me! Oh, do not fear me! Let my tears, my agony at this suspense, which wrings my tortured heart, convince you that my claim is nature's holiest one—a mother's love!"

Mr. Foster mentally observed that his client carefully avoided positively stating that she was her mother.

"I believe it!" said Sally.

"What says the child?" demanded Mrs. Watkins, not altogether pleased with the readiness of her lodger in giving an opinion before she had spoken.

"I believe it!" repeated the dancer, firmly. "A hundred times Fanny has described to me her mother—her dark, thoughtful eyes—her voice of affection—their solitary life!"

"Bless her!" murmured Martha. "She has not forgotten me!"

"One thing," continued Sally, "puzzles me!"

Every one was anxious for her to proceed.

"She described her parent as poor—living in a dark, gloomy house—but where she could not tell! Now this lady appears to be rich—has fine clothes—a carriage—friends ——"

"I was poor!" interrupted Miss Mendez, "miserably poor, and helpless as the outcast who has no friend but heaven! I had been deprived unjustly of my fortune; but the injustice is repaired! I am rich in the world's dross; but richer still in the love, the recollection of my lost treasure! Restore her to me—give me the means of proving the truth of my assertion—and amply will I reward you!"

These words, pronounced with the energy of true grief, wrung from the heart whose love had been unjustly suspected, made a visible impression upon her hearers, even old Meg was touched; several times she raised her apron to her eyes to wipe away her tears.

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed the German, "but I do believe her!"

As for Barry, he had long been convinced.

"The proof you demand, madam," said the blind lieutenant, "you have a right to exact—and I am sure the friends of Fanny will willingly consent that you should see her in their presence! If the child recognises you ——"

"She will—she will!" interrupted Martha, in a tone of exultation; "I stake my claim upon the result!"

All were of the officer's opinion except Mrs. Watkins; she desired one proof more which, as it promised a *coup de theatre*, was exactly in her style, and accorded with her tastes and feelings. The old lady loved the romantic, even in the simplest circumstances of life.

"Of course," she observed, "you will recognise her?"

Miss Mendez smiled—the doubt appeared so preposterous.

"In that case," continued the actress, "perhaps you will look around you!"

"I do not understand you!"

"Do you see no memorial of her?"

The picture which Barry had painted, introducing the speaker as the Duchess of York, and Fanny and Sally as the young princes, was hanging in the apartment. No sooner did the glance of Martha fall upon it, than she burst into a flood of happy tears; it was the proof—the irrefragable proof—that the child she had mourned and the one they had protected was the same She pressed her lips silently to the canvas, the action was more eloquent than words—not a doubt remained.

"It would be cruel," said the young painter, "to trifle with such feelings! Within an hour you shall see her. You have a carriage at the door—we will accompany you!"

"Yes," added Sally; "such a meeting will improve the hearts of those who witness it!"

CHAPTER XL.

Oh, this tyrant doubt disturbs my breast,
My thoughts like birds who, frightened from their nest,
Around the place where all was hushed before,
Flutter and hardly nestle any more. OTWAY.

SHALL I behold her? Will she recognise me? Will the desire of years, the ceaseless yearnings of my heart, be gratified?

Such were the questions which Martha repeatedly asked herself as the carriage rolled rapidly towards Highgate.

Her companions remained silent during the ride—or if they spoke it was only in whispers to each other. Convinced of the reality of the lady's claim, they felt that her anxiety and affection admitted but one consolation—the presence of Fanny—all else was a mockery and disappointment. The lawyer mentally argued whether the tie between his client and the orphan was or was not closer than she had hitherto acknowledged.

"If not the child of Miss Mendez, whose child was she?" he repeatedly asked himself.

Sally reflected with foreboding sadness on the distance which the discovery placed between her adopted sister and herself; whilst Barry and the aged actress felt only

unqualified pleasure at the brilliant prospects of their little favorite.

On reaching the lodge at the end of the lawn in front of the cottage, the party found, to their surprise, that the gate was open, and the neat gravel walk deeply indented with the ruts made by the wheels of some heavily-laden vehicle. There were straws, too, scattered upon the path, and adhering to the white-thorn hedge and shrubs—the unmistakeable signs of a removal. Poor Martha observed them, and turned her eyes inquiringly to her companions.

"Furniture most likely has been brought to the house," observed the lawyer.

His client smiled incredulously.

"It must be that!" added the young painter, "for it is only three days since we saw them here—Fanny and madame! They cannot have removed so suddenly!"

Both Sally and Mrs. Watkins declared the supposition ridiculous. Without a word or hint—it was impossible.

How often does the presentiment of ill prepare us for the reality—soften the blow which otherwise would crush us! There was no appearance of desolation about the place which warned the anxious woman she was once more doomed to disappointment.

By this time the carriage had reached the front of the cottage. Instead of Fanny—her pale face lit with smiles—or the still beautiful though sad countenance of Madame Garrachi advancing to the porch to welcome them, the daughter of the old couple who resided at the lodge made her appearance, and demanded who they wanted.

How the heart of Martha sank at the question.

"Want!" repeated Sally, who now felt thoroughly alarmed; "why Fanny—madame, to be sure! Whom else should we want!"

"They be gone!" replied the girl with a broad grin.

Doubtless it appeared an excellent joke to her that gentlefolks, as she called them, should come all the way from London and be disappointed.

"Gone out, you mean!" observed the young painter.

"Gone for good and all!" said the informant; "gone to furrin' parts, I take it! Feyther says it be mortal droll! Marks, the broker, bought all the things for an old song: they be nearly cleared out—only one load more!"

Barry and Mr. Foster sprang from the carriage and assisted the ladies to alight. No sooner did her feet touch the ground, than Martha darted past the girl into the *house*, hunted through every room, calling *in the most endearing terms* upon her child to answer her. The distress of Sally was scarcely less poignant.

Fanny's chamber was the only one in which the furniture had not been disturbed: there was the little bed with its white curtains—the pillow which her head had so lately pressed. Several of her old copy books, and some flowers fading for want of fresh water were upon the table.

"Gone!" sobbed Martha, throwing herself upon the pillow, and covering it with kisses; "gone! and I am still doomed to be desolate!"

The dancer, who had followed her, sat down upon the window-sill and cried for sympathy.

The lawyer—who meanwhile had been making inquiries of the man at the lodge—appeared at the door of the chamber, followed by Barry. The old actress was too indignant, and too much agitated at what she considered the unwarrantable conduct of Madame Garrachi in removing Fanny from England without consulting her friends—to follow them.

She gradually consoled herself, however, by the reflection that madame was only a Frenchwoman and a singer, and did not belong to the legitimate part of the profession.

"Gone!" exclaimed Sally, with a fresh burst of tears, as soon as she saw her lover; "gone, without a word or a line to me!"

"Ungrateful, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Mendez, with a sigh; "she must be sadly changed! They have corrupted her young heart, and——"

"She is not ungrateful!" interrupted Sally, indignantly—for the surest way to rouse her spirit was to say anything disparaging of her favorite; "she never was and never will be ungrateful—and you are the last person in the world who ought to say so! Night after night she has kept me awake describing your looks, your words, and kindness to her! How else should I have recognised you? We never met without her speaking of you; and when we drank tea at the lodge with Miss Mellon, and the servants handed round cake in great silver baskets, and wine, and fruit, she whispered in my ear that she would sooner receive a crust of bread from the hand of her dear mother! I begin to believe you are not her mother," she added, "or you would never have the heart to blame her!"

Every word which the speaker intended as a reproach was a balm to the disappointed Martha—for it proved to her that the child of her adoption had not forgotten her—that she still held the first place alike in her memory and love. Instead of feeling angry with the dancer, she would have

pressed her in her arms and kissed her.—This pleasing satisfaction was still further increased by a discovery which Barry made in one of the copybooks; it was part of a letter written by Fanny to her sister, in which she stated that madame was now kind—very kind—to her; that she, too, had heard of the invention of her enemies to get her once more in their power—and that they were to travel for some time, to avoid them.

"Go where I will," continued the affectionate child, "I shall always love you—always think of you! You and my dear—dear mother hold the first place in my heart! There are others whom I love, too—but not as I do you!" Here the writing was broken off with "God bless you, my own dear sister Sally! Madame has promised that I shall write to you as soon as we are settled!"

Martha pressed the senseless paper to her lips, and appeared to derive such consolation from the possession of it, that the kind-hearted girl to whom it was addressed forbore to claim it.

"Who is this madame?" demanded Miss Mendez, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered her self-possession to ask the question; "and by what right does she pretend to dispose of my child without consulting her oldest, only friends!"

The history of the singer and the manner in which Fanny had become an inmate of her house were duly explained to her by Barry and Sally; the former justified the step by stating the evident danger which threatened the orphan from her persecutors, and the inability of Mrs. Watkins to protect her.

"We thought it," he urged, "the most advisable step we could take! The blind old officer and Weitzer and his wife, who love her like their own child, concurred in it—the advantages were so many: as, independent of the protection which it afforded, it assured the cultivation of her talents—an education to fit her for the most brilliant position in the profession!"

"Do you think this Madame Garrachi loves her?"

"There can be no doubt of it!" answered the painter; "she treats her in every respect like her own child! The most expensive masters are engaged for her, and the progress she has made under them is astonishing!"

"But is she a good woman?" demanded Martha, thoughtfully.

"Of that," said the young man, "there is not the least doubt! Suspicion has never tainted her name! She is unhappy—virtuous!"

After consulting with Mr. Foster, it was arranged that the party should at once proceed to Holly Lodge—the residence of Miss Mellon—who, doubtless, they considered, could afford some clue to the precipitate flight of her *protegée:* in which expectation they were doomed to a second disappointment.

The actress received them with her usual affability—listened with the greatest interest to Martha's tale of sorrow—the trials and abductions of poor Fanny.

"I cannnot explain the motives of Madame Garrachi!" she said, as soon as the narrator had finished; "but that she has strong ones for her conduct, I cannot doubt! I feel for your disappointment; but I have not the means of lessening it! That she is attached to the child is certain! That Fanny is perfectly safe with her, is equally so! For the rest, time only can explain the mystery!"

"Has she really left England?" demanded Mr. Foster.

"She has!" replied Miss Mellon; "she drew, yesterday, a large sum of money from the hands of my —— from the hands of her banker!"

"For France?"

"Possibly!"

"And have you no clue," said Martha, imploringly, "by which I can trace her? Feel for the anxiety of a mother!"

"I do feel for it!" replied the actress; "and most gladly would I alleviate it, were it in my power; but even to me—who have some claims upon the friendship of Madame Garrachi—her intentions are a secret! I need not tell you," she continued, "that she has suffered much—that her domestic happiness has been destroyed! "All I know is, that she has conceived some romantic project of revenge, in which Fanny is to be the instrument!"

With this scanty information they departed. One weight, at least, was removed from the heart of the anxious woman—she knew that the child was well, and tenderly cared for—safe from the horrors of vice and infamy, which assail unprotected innocence; and, struggling with her disappointment, she strove to feel content

When Miss Wyndham heard the result of the visit which was to have introduced a rival in the heart of the heiress, her satisfaction nearly betrayed itself: not in words—the cold, calculating girl was far too cautious for that; but in the sudden flash of her eye and the scarcely suppressed smile upon her lips.

From the first hour of her entering the house of Miss Mendez, she had resolved to inherit her vast fortune—and circumstances seemed to favor her design.

"She must love some one!" she argued

"The heart cannot exist in solitude for ever! A little patience and hypocrisy, and the golden prize will be mine!"

With this resolution, she devoted herself more assiduously than ever to win the confidence and regard which, by a singular perversity, as she considered it, appeared to retreat from her advances.

As for Clement Foster, with the natural gallantry of his age, he often indulged in unmeaning speeches and attentions, which the young lady flattered herself might ripen in time to a more serious attachment; but with all her art, she had hitherto failed in drawing from him an explicit declaration. He resembled the butterfly, which hovers round the flower without alighting on its stem. The youth was pleased with her beauty, her fascinating manners and accomplishments—loved to hear her sing—to walk, to ride, to flirt with her; whilst his heart still remained untouched—its voice had not spoken yet. Miss Wyndham called him cold. She little knew the depth of passion and devotion which nature had concealed within his breast. At times she compared it to a rock—but it was the rock of Hebron: once struck, the hidden streams of sympathy and affection would gush forth.

When we first introduced the youth to the acquaintance of our readers, we observed that his father had a strong desire that he should follow his own profession—the law: we say desire—for it was out of his power to control him: a maiden aunt—blessings on all such—they are the providence of most young men—had left him a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, of which he was to be the absolute master on reaching the age of twenty-one. Clement knew this—but, to do him justice, he never presumed upon it. So strong was his affection for his parent, that, despite his repugnance for the career marked out for him, he devoted himself with praiseworthy resignation to mastering the intricacies of conveyancing; and even Mr. Griffiths confessed that, considering his age, he had a pretty notion of Chancery practice. The lawyer was delighted; but the heart of the father watched the struggle between duty and inclination with solicitude and fear. Whenever he fancied that the cheek of Clement looked unusually pale, he bade him close his books and take a week's or fortnight's holiday in the country—a permission which his son eagerly seized: and hence his repeated visits to Brierly Grange—visits which the return of Martha to London had now put an end to.

"Clem. will never make a lawyer!" observed the lady to Mr. Foster—who, with *his son, had been dining* with her in Harley street.

"And why not?" said the gentleman with a nervous smile.

"He has no vocation for the profession.'

"It will come with time!"

"Resignation, or apathy, possibly!" replied his client; "but never that ardor which can alone secure success in an honorable pursuit! Poor boy!" she continued; "his heart is consuming itself! I cannot bear to see it! Do not be angry; but my regard, my gratitude compel me to speak!"

"He studies hard!" observed her guest, determined not to be convinced.

"To please his father!" answered Martha. "Come, Mr. Foster, be reasonable!" she added; "you know how deeply I have been indebted, on more than one occasion, to your son—that I owe my very life to his courage and gallantry! Remember that his happiness is at stake: from boyhood his heart and mind have been fixed upon the army!"

"And who is to succeed me in my office?" demanded the old man, sharply.

"Not Clement, Mr. Foster!" replied his client; "whilst you live it is possible—nay, I think probable—for he loves you dearly—that he will sacrifice himself to please you; but once master of his destiny, he will use his liberty! You know how much I esteem him! I am rich—fearfully rich!" she added; "if any pecuniary motive——"

The lawyer moved uneasily upon his chair.

"Do not speak of it!" he said; "pray do not speak of it! Money! I thought you knew me better than to suppose that it could influence me! Besides, Clem., on reaching the age of one-and-twenty—thanks to the weakness of a foolish old aunt—will be perfectly independent of his father!"

"Does he know this?" said the lady.

"Yes!"

"Then his conduct is even more noble than I imagined; for the sacrifice is more complete!"

"Sacrifice!" repeated Mr. Foster. "I really cannot——"

"Do not quarrel with me!" interrupted the lady; "you and he are my only friends, and I cannot afford to lose either of you! You must have observed—for you are his father—how thin and pale he is getting, and the almost painfully anxious expression of his once cheerful countenance!"

"I have observed them!" replied the gentleman.

"This law is killing him!"

The gentleman smiled incredulously.

"Not the law," he said; "but that which has upset the philosophy of older heads than his—love!"

It was now Miss Mendez's turn to look astonished. Clement Foster had been so

frequently her guest—so domesticated with her—she had taken such an interest in studying his character and inclinations—fancied so many projects respecting him—that the feeling she experienced on hearing his father assert that he was in love was as nearly allied to disappointment as to surprise.

"In love!" she repeated; "why he is but a boy!"

"There are very few boys of seventeen in the world now!" observed the old gentleman, gravely; "there were such things in my time; but that is classed with the deluge and the heathen mythology! Is it possible you have not observed it?"

"Very possible!"

"Listen!" said the lawyer.

During this conversation, which had taken place in the front drawing-room, Clement and Miss Wyndham had been amusing themselves at the piano, in the apartment which communicated with it. The lady had just commenced a romance, and her companion was turning over the leaves of her music-book.

"His anxiety arises from the fear of my disapproval of his choice," continued the speaker; "and not, as you suppose, from distaste to the law! It is not exactly the match I should have selected," he added; "but she is the daughter of an old friend! Clem. loves her! I shall speak to him on the subject, and set his mind at rest!"

"Is it possible," thought Martha—whose mind, for some reason best known to herself, felt considerably relieved by the explanation "that this man of the world—this shrewd, far-seeing lawyer, who has studied character all his life—should be so completely deceived?"

Perhaps it was that he had only studied the characters of those he came in contact with, and not the hearts.

"You are wrong!" she said: "positively wrong! Your son feels no love for Miss Wyndham, unless it be a brother's love: and, unless you persuade him that he does, never will!"

"Look at them!"

"He is fond of music!"

"See how animated he is!"

"Her society is a relief from unpleasant thoughts!"

"But——"

"But!" repeated his client; "will you be convinced? Shall I prove to you that Clement would be even more surprised than I was by such a supposition? And if I do prove it," she added, "will you promise to reflect seriously upon what I have said?"

The promise was made—for Mr. Foster felt anxious to ascertain whether the suspicion *of his son's attachment* to the governess was well founded or not. The means which the speaker intended to take puzzled him. He could not comprehend her evident distaste to the affair.

"She can never be mad enough," he thought, "to think of him for herself! She is forty at the very least, and Clem. only seventeen!"

This was the only point on which the lawyer was not destined to be enlightened.

Whatever the feelings, inclinations, or projects of Miss Mendez, she kept them to herself.

Calling the young people from the back drawing-room, the lady asked Miss Wyndham to play the overture to Don Juan. As she was a great admirer of Mozart, the request did not surprise the governess. Clement was about to return with her, when Martha, by a gesture of her hand, informed him that he was to remain.

"I wish to consult you!" she said.

The youth took an ottoman, and drew it to the side of the sofa on which the lawyer and the lady were sitting.

"We have been speaking of Miss Wyndham!" observed Martha, as soon as the first notes of the instrument assured her that, for ten minutes at least, they were secure from interruption. "Your father has an excellent match in view for her!"

The countenance of the supposed lover, which had hitherto been serious enough, suddenly became radiant with smiles. As the speaker said, if he had any love for the clever artful girl, it was merely the love of a brother. He pitied her orphan, dependent position, and the idea of her marrying well afforded him unmixed satisfaction.

"Glad to here it!" he replied; "that is, provided the gentleman is worthy of her!"

"In every way!"

"Is he young?"

"Yes."

"And amiable?"

"Amiable and handsome!" replied Miss Mendez, with a glance of triumph at Mr. Foster, whose face expressed anything but satisfaction at the discovery of his son's indifference. He had hugged the idea that it was love, and not the law, which made Clement so miserable.

"I am very happy to hear it!" observed the young man. "It would be a thousand pities that so much sensibility and talent should be sacrificed to one who could not appreciate them! I feel certain that I shall like the fellow," he added, "if it is only for his generosity—for poor Harriet has every gift save that of fortune! May I ask his name?"

"Not yet!"

"When shall I be introduced to him?"

"All in good time!" replied his father,

coming to the relief of Miss Mendez, who began to feel embarrassed how to answer the questions which followed in succession. "In the meantime," he added, "not a word to Miss Wyndham! The natural delicacy of her character might feel hurt at the well meant solicitude of her friends! There—the overture is nearly over! She must not suspect that we have been speaking on such a subject!"

With a nod, as much as to say that he understood his wishes, Clement rose from the ottoman with the most unconcerned air imaginable, and returned to the piano.

"Are you convinced?" said Martha, in a low tone.

The lawyer replied by a sigh.

"And you will reflect?"

"Yes—yes!" he muttered impatiently; "I will reflect! It is hard to sacrifice the purpose of a life; but I will consider my project—my word is given!"

His client urged no more—she knew that he would keep it.

CHAPTER XLI.

Dost thou know the fate of soldiers?
They're but Ambition's tools, to cut a way
To her unlawful ends; and when they're worn,
Hack'd, hewn with constant service, thrown aside
To rust in peace and rot in hospitals.

SOUTHERN.

For several days after the above conversation, Mr. Foster appeared unusually moody and silent: the clerks in the office avoided addressing him as much as possible—for his answers were very sharp and brief. Even Mr. Griffiths felt the ash of the old man's caustic humor. The fact was, that an internal struggle was going on—a great revolution about to be accomplished.

Clement, perfectly unconscious that he was the engrossing subject of his father's thoughts, redoubled his attention, in the hope of pleasing him—and thereby rendered the sacrifice which the lawyer had half determined to make still more painful.

"Such aptitude!" Mr. Foster repeatedly muttered to himself! "that last abstract from Grindem and Bullock's case was faultless—absolutely faultless!"

He little knew the care and anxiety it had cost his son.

One morning the lawyer arrived at his office earlier than usual. Clement was already at his desk; the quick eye of the old man detected that his features were paler than usual; he even fancied that he saw a hectic spot upon his cheek—it decided him. With the air, though not quite the resignation of a martyr, he walked into his private room, placed his umbrella, with his usual precision, in the corner, took off his gloves and hat, then seated himself, and rang the bell twice—the signal for the attendance of the head clerk.

"Send Mr. Clement to me!" he said, as soon as Griffiths answered the summons.

"Yes, sir!"

"And remember I am not to be disturbed on any pretence!"

"I beg your pardon, sir!" replied the managing man; "but of course you have not forgotten that there is to be a consultation at eleven, at Serjeant White's chambers?"

"Send word that I shall not be able to attend!" interrupted his employer; "and do not let me be disturbed!"

"Certainly, sir—certainly!"

The astonished clerk withdrew to execute the orders he had received. During the thirty years he had been in the office, as man and boy, he had never known his principal neglect a consultation—the thing was unprecedented. Something serious—very serious—must have occurred; and he delivered his message with becoming solemnity.

As the door of the private room closed upon our hero, Mr. Griffiths felt that he would have given half his perquisites during the ensuing term to be present at the interview between father and son. He had a presentiment that somehow or other his own future destinies were mixed up in it.

Directly Clement entered the room, his father extended his hand to him. The youth grasped it warmly. He saw that an explanation was about to take place between them.

"I fear you are unwell, sir!" he said—for he perceived that tears were standing in the usually calm, piercing eyes of the lawyer.

"Nothing! It is nothing!" replied the old man, hastily; "the wind—the dust!"

In his agitation, he forgot that the day was a wet one.

"Clem.," he continued, "it is time that we understood each other! Sit down! I am satisfied with you—quite satisfied! You have striven as far as nature would permit to gratify my wish that you should succeed me in my profession! It is not your fault that you have not succeeded! Doubtless you consider my conduct," he added, "harsh and unreasonable towards you?"

"Never, sir!" replied the young man. "I may have repined—for none of us can master our inclinations—but never has my heart harbored a thought of unkindness or injustice against the best of parents!"

"I believe you, Clem. ! I believe you !" said Mr. Foster; "and this day I mean to prove that I fully appreciate the efforts you have made to gratify my wishes!"

"Sir!"

"By renouncing them!" continued the speaker; "yes, my dear boy—by renouncing them!" he repeated. "You might have braved me—for a few years will make you independent of my authority——"

"But not of your affection, sir!" interrupted Clement, eagerly; "never of your affection!"

"Do not interrupt me!" continued the lawyer, with a smile which proved how deeply the warmth of his son touched him; "thus much you must permit me to urge in justification of the tenacity with which I adhered to my design long after I had perceived your repugnance to my wishes. It was not the desire of seeing you in the profession only, but the stronger one of keeping you near me—of remaining in daily intercourse, in community of thought and pursuit, with the only being left me in the world to love. It is your wish to be a soldier?"

"I renounce it!" exclaimed his son; "from this moment I abandon the idea, and, if possible, the wish! I will do all that in me lies to prove worthy of so much affection and kindness, and in time——"

He hesitated, a sense of truth prevented his completing the sentence.

Mr. Foster paused—he felt strongly tempted to accept the generous offer of his only child to comply with his long cherished wishes; but his better feelings prevailed.

"No!" he replied, with firmness; "I had a right to demand the trial, but I have no right to extort or accept a sacrifice! You know," he added, with a faint smile, "the pertinacity with which I adhere to my resolutions when I have once taken them—how rarely I abandon them! From this hour the affair is settled!"

Clement was too much affected to thank his father as he wished—he could only press his hand and raise it to his lips. The old man gazed fondly on him: in his flashing eyes and the rich color which flushed his lately pale cheeks, he felt that he was almost repaid for his disappointment.

"Now, then, to business!" he said. "I have for many years been the legal adviser of Cox and Greenwood, the army agents, and shall find little difficulty in procuring you a commission—by purchase, of course! To-morrow I will call upon them, deposit the money, and introduce you to them. Although *only a lawyer*," he added, "they will receive you as well, and advance your wishes as zealously, as if presented by the *first peer of the realm!*"

The "*only a lawyer*" was the last drop of bitterness in the heart of the old man: from that moment he devoted himself earnestly and zealously to the task of furthering the wishes of his son.

"Have you decided which service you would prefer?" he asked.

Clement modestly hinted something about a cavalry regiment—but of course left everything to his father.

"Not a word as you leave the office!" observed Mr. Foster; "it will be known quite soon enough! I could not bear to witness the simpering smile of Griffiths, who will doubtless begin to think of a partnership! But he will be disappointed!" he added; "I respect the interests of my clients too much ever to commit them to such hands!"

Could the speaker have seen the malignant scowl upon the features of the managing clerk, who was listenieg at the door, it would have confirmed him in the opinion he had formed of that very obsequious gentleman's character.

Two months after the above conversation between father and son, Clement Foster, Esquire, was gazetted to a cornetcy in His Majesty's —— Regiment of Guards.

Poor Clem.! a more unfortunate choice could not have been made: it was what is termed, in the cant phrase of the day, a "fast regiment." The lieutenant-colonel was an aristocrat; from the captains down to the subalterns—scions of the best families in the country—all aped the tone of their commander. The first question asked when a man joined it was: "What family is he of?" The next, "What are his means?" And unless these questions could be answered satisfactorily, the new comer was likely to lead a harassing time of it: sneering, impertinence, practical jokes, glaring injustice—in fact, every means that could be devised—were put in practice to disgust the *parvenu*, or drive him from the regiment.

Colonel Barratt used to boast that he could get rid of a non-eligible man more quickly than any commanding officer in the service.

Our hero was presented at the levees of the Regent and the commander-in-chief, by a gallant general officer of the name of De Vere. He had long been a client of Mr. Foster's, and entertained a respect—almost a friendship—for him.

"Fine fellow—fine fellow!" said the old soldier, when Clement was introduced to him on the morning of the levee, by his father; "prove an ornament to the service, if Barratt does not contrive to spoil or ruin him!" he mentally added. "And so you are in the Guards, young gentleman!" he

continued, speaking once more aloud. "Expensive regiment! Crack fellows!"

"Clement will be rich!" observed the lawyer. "His aunt left him twenty thousand pounds, and he is my only son!"

"What do you allow him?"

"Eight hundred a-year!" replied the old gentleman, complacently.

"Too much!" exclaimed the general; "too much by half! When I entered the army, I had but two hundred a-year and my pay! True," he muttered, "I was not gazetted to a crack regiment!"

To Mr. Foster, the term "crack regiment" conveyed about as much information as if the speaker had alluded to the incarnation of Vishnu, or the Hyperborean isles of Hecateus. He had unbounded confidence in the prudence and good conduct of his son.

The presentations over, Clement called upon the general, to thank him for his kindness, previous to his leaving town to join his regiment at Windsor: he was received most cordially.

"If you find yourself placed in any difficult or unpleasant position, my dear boy," said the veteran, "do not hesitate to apply to me for advice! I am an old soldier, and you a raw recruit! I know every move in the routine of the service—you are ignorant of everything! Beware of quarrels—avoid gambling—act with discretion, as well as firmness—and above all, be exceedingly careful *what you write!*"

"*Write!*" repeated the young Guardsman.

"More men have been ruined by letters than by words!"

"I do not understand you, general!"

"I suppose not!" answered the veteran; "but you soon will!"

"I enter the service," observed his visitor, "from a sincere love of the profession I have chosen, and a desire to prove myself worthy of the commission I have the honor to bear!"

"And you will do so, I have no doubt!" replied General De Vere; "*if they will let you!*" he mentally added. "A regiment," he continued, speaking aloud, "is a rough school, especially at the commencement! Your temper will be tried in every way—your conduct criticised—not over favorably perhaps—for you have not the *prestige* of an aristocratic name or family connection! Do your duty—remember my caution—and you have nothing to fear!"

At the word "fear," the cheeks of his visitor flushed.

"There—there! I did not mean to impugn your courage, my dear boy!" continued the speaker, with a smile; "we old men are fond of preaching, and see difficulties where youth dreams only of success. Good bye! and once more remember, if you should require the counsel of a friend you know where to find one! In case of emergency, consult the adjutant of your regiment—he is an old friend of mind, and will serve you for my sake!"

With this, they shook hands and parted—his adviser giving him letters of introduction to Colonel Barratt and Lieutenant Bridgem—the officer last named.

The same day our hero reached Windsor, where he found a letter from Miss Mendez, begging his acceptance of a charger, awaiting his arrival. It was a magnificent creature—more than one officer of his regiment had seen it—but had been deterred from purchasing it by the price. The grateful woman had paid five hundred guineas for it. Little did she dream of the enmity her gift to her young favorite would excite.

"So the new man has joined!" observed Lord Peapod—the nephew of Colonel Barratt—as the officers were chatting at lunch, in the mess-room; "any one know him?"

There was a general silence—all looked at the commanding officer.

"He brought a letter of introduction from General De Vere," said the latter, after a pause; "who, I perceive by the *Gazette*, stood sponsor for him at the levee!"

"Any relative?"

A dry negative was the response.

"What is the fellow's name?" drawled Walter Trevanian, who happened to be first lieutenant of the troop in which Clement was now a cornet.

"Foster."

"A Foster, or The Foster?"

"Oh, no relative to the baronet!" replied the colonel; "his father is a lawyer!"

A general expression of dissatisfaction followed the announcement.

"Another Philistine!" exclaimed Captain Marshall, who enjoyed the reputation of being the most accomplished bully in the regiment; "we shall soon smoke him out!"

"Philistine or not," observed Cornet Mortimer—a young sprig of nobility, who had lately joined—"he must be devilish rich: he has bought the bay charger which Peapod and the major were so anxious about! I saw it in the barrack-yard!"

"The bay charger!" repeated his lordship, in a tone of vexation; "why, I offered four hundred guineas for it!"

"And I four hundred and fifty!" added the major.

From that moment the unconscious subject of the conversation had two decided enemies in the regiment.

"We shall see what the fellow is like at dinner!" said Colonel Barratt, not wish-

at that moment to push the conversation any further—for the adjutant had joined them, and he knew that the "new man" had brought letters to him from General De Vere, as well as to himself.

"No doubt he feeds with his knife!" whispered the young nobleman in the ear of Walter Trevanian.

The latter shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"The service is going to the devil," continued the speaker, "when they let such fellows creep into it! But money will purchase anything now, from a commission to —a—a ——"

"A bay charger!" added Trevanian, finishing the sentence for him.

"Curse the charger!" muttered his lordship.

"Better *smoke* the rider!" observed Walter, drily.

The young men exchanged glances of mutual intelligence, and let the conversation drop; but from that morning it was tacitly understood that the new-comer was to be got rid of. The son of a lawyer was considered as a black sheep in the regiment.

At mess, our hero was formally introduced to his brother officers, who returned his salutation with that polite indifference which wounds more than positive impertinence. Clement felt no less surprised than offended at first: he could not comprehend the tone of the society into which, for the first time in his life, he was thrown. A few moments' reflection, however, reconciled him to it. Unconscious of having given cause either of offence or coolness, he concluded that it was the etiquette of the mess-room, and accommodated himself to it accordingly.

At the end of the first course, one of the mess-waiters came to him, and whispered in his ear that Colonel Barratt would do himself the honor of taking wine with him.

Next followed the major and captains, in the several degrees of military hierarchy, down to the cornet, whose experience in the service was only three weeks greater than his own.

The wine was champagne—*purposely chosen*. Clement saw that at each challenge the officer who invited him emptied his glass. After the first three or four, he hesitated in following the example.

"My dear fellow, what are you about to do?" whispered Walter Trevanian, who was seated next to him; "no heel-taps!"

"I am unused to drink so much wine!" replied the new-comer.

"Pshaw!" said the first speaker; "there is not a headache in a dozen of it! It will be thought personal if you do not empty it!"

The intended victim took the advice so treacherously proffered. How could the unsophisticated boy of seventeen suppose for an instant that the well-bred, smiling man who addressed him in such a friendly tone had any sinister design? He had never seen him till that day, and he wore the uniform which, in his opinion, was the seal upon the character of gentlemen. Still, by way of precaution, the next time he was challenged to wine he only half filled his glass.

There was a general glance round the table.

"Wide awake!" whispered Lord Peapod.

"Shirks the wine!" thought Captain Marshall, who was the challenger.

"What are you dreaming of?" said Lieutenant Marsh; "Mr. Foster is waiting for you!"

"Mr. Foster has not *filled* his glass!" observed the captain, gravely.

Had our hero been the bashful boy they took him for, he would have apologised, and instantly have filled it to the brim. But he had more discernment and tact than his brother officers—what a prostitution of the word brother!—gave him credit for.

"Captain Marshall," he said, "has considered only his kind feeling towards me—and not my capacity for wine-drinking! I have already exceeded my usual quantity!"

"Three glasses of port after dinner!" simpered one of the youngsters, who was beginning to look very red in the face.

"Ladies measure!" added a second.

Still the "new man"—as they termed him—remained unmoved; and Captain Marshall, bowing stiffly, drank off his wine in silence.

There was a pause: the attempt to intoxicate him was evidently a failure.

"That's a devilish fine horse of yours!" observed the major.

"Which?"

"The bay charger. Peapod offered four hundred for it! What was the figure?"

"I really cannot tell you!" replied Clement, glad that the conversation had taken another turn; "the animal was a gift from a dear and valued friend?"

"In the City?"

Although our hero did not comprehend the difference between a friend in the City and one at the West End, he perfectly understood the tone in which the question was asked, and replied by a dry negative.

"Beg pardon," said the major; "thought it might be! Very respectable people, *I have heard*, live in the City! I dare say, now," he continued, "they bestowed a vast amount of good advice upon you when they heard you were gazetted?"

"No, indeed!" answered the young man, carelessly; "knowing that I was to associate only with gentlemen, they did not conceive it necessary! General De Vere was the only person who gave me the least caution!"

At the word *caution*, several of the officers regarded each other with a smile: they thought they had hit upon a theme on which "to trot him out."

"It must have been very edifying!" observed his lordship.

"A military sermon!" added Walter Trevanian.

"Drum-head lecture!"

"Upon my word, gentlemen, it was a very simple one!" said Clement; "such as a man of his rank and experience in the service might well give to a youth like myself just entering life! He merely told me that I had much to learn—to endure ——"

"As a young bear who has not been taught to dance!" whispered Captain Marshall to his neighbor.

"Above all, to bear and forbear!" continued the speaker; "and to be very cautious ——"

He paused: something told him that it might not be advisable to relate all that the general had said.

"Cautious! About what?" demanded Trevanian.

"In my conduct generally!" replied Clement Foster; "in short, gentlemen, you may imagine all that a kind friend would say upon such an occasion!"

"It's my deliberate opinion," drawled Lord Peapod, whose brain was already excited by wine, "that—hiccup—hem—that De Vere is a prig!"

There was a slight coughing round the table, as if to drown the word, but the quick ear of the new cornet caught it.

"May I request your lordship," he said, coloring to the temples, "to repeat the word!"

"That he is—hic—hem—a prig—a prig, sir—write down a prig—*engross* it, if you like!"

Clement rose to leave the mess-room.

"Sit still!" whispered Walter Trevanian, catching him by the arm. "Can't you see Peapod is drunk? He is little better than an ass when sober!"

"I cannot remain," replied our hero, firmly, "after hearing such an epithet applied to one of my kindest friends, whose rank, services, and *absence*," he added, in a very pointed tone, "ought to protect him from such observations!"

It was evident that the new-comer was *not* the soft-witted fool they had imagined *—for he had not only* defeated the attempt *to intoxicate him,* but contrived to place one of his *insidious* tormentors in a false position. Fortunately for his lordship, the colonel came to his rescue.

"I perceive," Mr. Foster, he said, "that you are unacquainted with military manners and military language! An officer who does his duty—is remarkable as a disciplinarian—is frequently termed a 'prig' or a 'martinet' by the youngsters! We only laugh at it as a boyish petulance—such things are never seriously noticed!"

Clement instantly resumed his seat, remarking that, after such an explanation, he must have been too susceptible.

"I am sure you will pardon me," he added, "when I tell you that I owe a deep debt of gratitude to General De Vere!"

"Certainly! Very natural!" exclaimed several of the youngsters.

"Know better in time!" added the major.

"Who could have imagined," continued the youth, not perhaps without a certain degree of malice, "that so much good feeling existed in the army? I should have thought, now, that if any officer had ventured to call you—Colonel Barratt—a 'prig,' you would have felt exceedingly indignant!"

"Such things are seldom addressed to a commanding officer's face!" replied the colonel, turning very red; "and when they are, *as seldom forgotten!*"

Unable to conceal the rage and vexation which he felt at being obliged to endure what he considered the insolence of a *parvenu*, Colonel Barratt rose from the table, and, drawing his chair towards the fireplace, called to the mess-man for brandy-and-water and cigars. This was the usual signal for the officers to disperse into groups. The dinner, with its formal etiquette, was considered over.

Our hero, satisfied with the wine he had already taken, left the room, with the intention of retiring to his quarters for the night.

In the ante-room, he encountered the adjutant, who shook him warmly by the hand. Being a married man, he did not dine with the mess.

"I must congratulate you!" said the officer, kindly.

"Congratulate me!" repeated Clement, with a look of surprise; "may I ask, my dear sir, upon what event or occasion?"

"On quitting your first mess-dinner sober! It is an ordeal that few youngsters pass without committing themselves—and then heaven help them!"

The cornet began to consider that he had had a narrow escape.

The adjutant listened with interest to the account of the conversation which had

taken place at table, and secretly smiled at the tact with which the youngster had acquitted himself. He had a kinder motive in detaining him than the speaker imagined: he wished to ascertain beyond a doubt that he was perfectly sober.

"Good bye!" said the old soldier at last. "I was anxious to serve you, for General De Vere's sake, who warmly recommended you to my care; but now I feel doubly so for your own! Continue to act with the prudence you have commenced, and you will pass the ordeal unscathed!"

"Ordeal! I do not exactly comprehend you!"

"Hush!" said the adjutant, as the door opened, and the major came reeling out of the mess-room; "it will be clear to you soon enough!"

Clement retired to his quarters dull and disappointed. His introduction to his regiment he felt had not commenced under the most favorable auspices. His brother officers were not the frank, open-hearted set of men he expected to meet with. It was his first lesson in life, and he mentally confessed that it was a hard one.

Taking off his uniform with far less pleasure than he had put it on, he threw himself, half-dressed, upon the little camp-bed, which his servant had just arranged, and tried to amuse himself by reading, but the events of the day had disturbed him. After several vain attempts, he closed the volume and threw it from him.

"I must be careful!" he said; "I feel that I have made an enemy!"

He might have added a dozen, and yet not have been far from the truth.

"Snob," "*parvenu*," and "lawyer's clerk" were the epithets which were bandied round the mess-room as Clement Foster withdrew. Not an officer present but affected to feel indignant at the insult—for so they were pleased to term it—which had been offered to the colonel—who was compelled for once to chew the cud of his resentment—for he felt he could not notice it.

"This fellow will give us some trouble, I am afraid!" observed the commanding officer to Captain Marshall.

"Pshaw! We shall soon tame him!"

"It's my—it's my 'pinion," hiccupped Lord Peapod, "that the fella is drunk, gentlemen—very drunk! Disgraceful—pro—proceeding!"

"He certainly took a stiff quantity of champagne!"

"And looked very red!" observed Walter Trevanian.

"Especially," added the little cornet, "when his lordship called General De Vere a prig."

This was an unfortunate observation—a reminiscence, which all present wished to forget. The bully of the regiment called the speaker a fool, and Lieutenant Marsh asked him if he had forgotten his sword-exercise.

The poor boy, whose heart was not yet quite corrupted, colored to the temples.

"In my opinion, Mr. Foster was decidedly drunk!" exclaimed Captain Marshall; "and the affair ought to be noticed!"

At this moment the adjutant entered the room, with the orderly book.

"Ah, Bridgem!" said the colonel, "always some annoyance or another! This new man, Foster—or whatever the devil his name is—is a puppy—a low——In short, you hear what Marshall says—drunk the first day at mess!"

"Marshall is mistaken! I have just been conversing with the gentleman, and can assure you that he is as sober, colonel, as any gentleman present!"

The commanding officer bit his lips: he felt that after such a declaration it would be impossible to proceed in his design—he must await a more favorable opportunity.

Lord Peapod approached the adjutant, and, laying his hand on his shoulder with maudlin familiarity, spluttered out:

"Say he was—hiccup—drunk—drunk, old fella! Everybody says he was drunk! You won't stand out from the rest of the—hiccup—the rest of the regiment!"

The old soldier turned away with unmistakeable signs of disgust.

CHAPTER XLII.

If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
With that which he had drunk to-night already,
He'll be as full of quarrel and offence
As my young mistress's dog.—SHAKESPEARE.

It had long been an established point of tactics in the regiment commanded by the gallant Colonel Barratt, when they wished to get rid of a man whose birth, character, or manners displeased the fastidious taste or prejudices of the officers, to make the intended victim drunk on the first night of his introduction to the mess—to force him, under the plea of good-fellowship, to commit himself—to place himself in their power. Then followed a series of insults, outrages, and mortifications, which terminated either in a court-martial or in the persecuted youth demanding permission to sell out, as a means of avoiding disgrace.

The members of the mess, from the colonel to Cornet Mortimer—who looked upon his release from the annoyances he

nightly endured as the natural consequence of the joining of a junior officer—felt annoyed at the tact with which our hero had escaped from the first snare spread for him. The feeling, perhaps, on the part of the latter was a very natural one; persecution generally has the effect of rendering its victim selfish. The cornet had fallen the very first night into the trap, and the triumph of those who laid it was most unmerciful. Frequently he had submitted to being dragged from his bed, brought down in his shirt to the mess-room, and made to go through the sword-exercise with a walking-stick, for the amusement of his brother officers—*brother officers!* What a term! To be sure, Cain and Abel were brothers—and that fact may justify the use of the term.

"It's my opinion," hiccupped Lord Peapod, as soon as the adjutant had retired, "that the lawyer's clerk has had the best of it!"

Colonel Barratt knit his brows.

"Clever fella—veery!" continued the half-drunken speaker; "called you a prig—prig to your face—and you could not quarrel with him! The bear—no, no—lion, old fella—lion, I mean—was muzzled! Capital joke! Champagne!" he added, turning to the mess-room waiter; "bring more champagne—and iced—ice—iced!"

"Thanks to your folly," observed his uncle, "we have all been compelled to put up with the young tapeworm's impertinence."

At the word "tapeworm" there was a general titter—it was considered exceedingly witty from the colonel: had a sub ventured to utter it, he would have been sneered down.

The commanding officer drew his chair once more to the table, and the wine which his lordship had called for circulated freely.

"By-the-bye, Marshall," said Walter Trevanian, addressing his neighbor, "it was rather pointed of the youngster to *commence* filling half-glasses with you; he might have waited till he got to the lieutenants—you were the last captain!"

The bully of the regiment muttered an oath, and began twisting his moustache—a sure sign that this blood was up to quarreling point. The speaker marked the effect of his speech with secret satisfaction—for from the moment he first beheld our hero, he had conceived a feeling of more than ordinary aversion towards him.

Perhaps it was a presentiment that they were doomed to cross each other's path through life.

"*It was very unhandsome of him,*" exclaimed the little cornet, "to refuse his wine! I am sure I did not refuse mine!"

Captain Marshall placed his hand upon the poor boy's head, and ruffled his hair till the tears stood in his eyes; then, regarding him for an instant, pronounced, with a broad grin upon his insolent features:

"Orson is endowed with reason!"

There was a general shout of approval, which stung the cornet to the quick, and, for the first time in his life he ventured on a retort.

"Valentine and Orson are brothers!" he said, placing his hand on the broad shoulders of the bully.

The reply would have been received in solemn silence, had not Colonel Barratt, whose vanity was consoled by the hit at his subordinate, broke into a hearty laugh.

As a matter of etiquette, every one at the table, with the exception of Marshall, laughed too. He bit his lips in silence.

"We shall have some fun to-night!" thought Lieutenant Marsh.

Probably the offender thought so, too—for the words had scarcely escaped his lips, when he would have given a month's pay to have recalled them. In his mind's eye he saw himself once more on the mess-room table, going through the sword-exercise in his shirt—the bully acting as fugleman.

By this time the party were ripe for mischief. Lord Peapod declared that it was an *intol—lolerable* shame that they should suffer themselves to be bullied by a mere boy, and proposed that they should smoke him out out of his den—the cant word in the regiment for a youngster's chamber.

Trevanian and the cornet eagerly seconded him.

Half mad with wine—shouting, laughing, or singing fragments of obscene songs, they rushed from the mess-room, without paying the least attention to the *very mild* remonstrance and caution of Colonel Barratt not to carry their jest too far.

"Have him down, old *fella!*" sputtered his nephew; "draw him like a badger!"

"Beware of the adjutant!"

"The old pikestaff be——"

A "hiccup" prevented his lordship completing the sentence.

Clement Foster, little imagining the scene about to be enacted, was lying half-dressed upon the bed, when a succession of thundering raps at the door of his room startled him from his reverie, and half a dozen voices called upon him to admit them.

"Good heavens!" he thought; "they must be tipsy!"

"Come out, young tape and parchment!" shouted the ringleader of the band; "come and learn your exercise!"

"Who's there?" demanded our hero.

"The drill-master!"

A drunken laugh followed the reply.

Although so young, Clement—as we have shown elsewhere—was a lad not only of courage, but, what is much more to the purpose under some circumstances, of considerable presence of mind. His reception at the mess-table, the attempt to intoxicate him, and the sneer at his kind friend General De Vere had impressed him with the idea that his brother officers were not favorably disposed towards him. The terms "tape and parchment" confirmed him. He determined to be cautious, and to let no provocation lead him from what he knew to be right.

Their further demands for admittance were heard in silence.

"They must be tired out at last!" he thought.

Little did he imagine the excess of which gentlemen and *brother officers* were capable. Furious at his refusing to reply to them, the door, to his astonishment, was kicked open, and his lordship, Walter Trevanian, Marsh, Mortimer, and two lieutenants rolled into the room, with a loud view halloo, as if they had unearthed a fox.

As for Captain Marshall, he kept in the passage. Like most bullies, he was not without a certain degree of prudence, and did not think proper to compromise himself; it was time enough for him to join in the chace when the game had been fairly started.

The moment the drunken ruffians forced an entrance into his room, Clement Foster, with great presence of mind, rang the bell for his servant George, the young man who had been gamekeeper at Brierly Grange. The poor fellow had become so attached to him during his visits to Miss Mendez, that he threw up his situation to live with him. Fortunately he was not a soldier; his first idea had been to enlist, but his young master had dissuaded him from it.

"Well, gentlemen!" said our hero, determined to preserve his temper as long as possible, "what can I offer you? Wine, brandy-and-water, or coffee?"

"Curse your coffee!" replied the peer.

"No milksops in the Guards!" added Walter Trevanian, who was the most sober of the party.

"No—no!" shouted the rest.

"May I ask what has procured me the honor of this extraordinary visit?" demanded the youth, in a tone which called forth screams of laughter from his assailants.

"You must learn your exercises—necessary, be gad! Must learn it—credit of the regiment! We are come—hiccup—to—to teach you the—— We are gentlemen—gentle—men, by gad, sir!"

The drunken gravity with which this was uttered only provoked a smile.

"Bring him down!" added the speaker.

It had never entered into the imagination of Clement that any one of the intruders would venture to lay a hand upon him, as to all appearance he was undressed—the coverlet of the bed being drawn over him.

"Bring him down!" exclaimed Marsh, "and let us show him how the young bears are taught to dance!"

The proposal was hailed with a yell that would have done honor to a party of Indians in the back settlements of America. There was a struggle which should be foremost in dragging him from his bed. Walter Trevanian, who first laid hands upon him, had little cause to congratulate himself upon his triumph—since he received a blow which sent him reeling towards the door.

Mad with rage, the excited ruffian caught up a water-bottle on the table near him, and was about to hurl it at the head of our hero, when it was suddenly snatched from his hand. Turning round, he encountered George, who made his appearance just in time to prevent the execution of his brutal design.

"Who the devil are you?" roared the officer.

"Mr. Foster's servant, sir!" replied the young man, in a very respectful tone.

"You are an impertinent scoundrel, and I am a fool for not breaking your head!"

"I never contradict my master's friends, sir!"

Incensed beyond measure by the reply, Walter Trevanian raised his hand to strike the speaker; but the ex-gamekeeper had not the least idea of submitting to such an outrage; he caught his wrist as it descended, and, bending it back, forced the young ruffian upon his knees. Once there, he lifted him suddenly in his arms, as if he was a child, and carried him out of the room, then hastened back to the assistance of Clement, who was struggling with his drunken antagonists.

In a very few seconds the apartment was cleared, the broken door replaced, and barricaded by placing a book-case and one or two trunks against it.

That done, the two young men sat down—the officer on the edge of his camp-bedstead, and the servant on the remains of an easy chair—and gazed on each other for several minutes in silence. George was the first to speak.

"Sharp work, sir!"

"Why, yes!" replied Clement; "it's not exactly the reception I expected; but, as one of them said, I suppose I am like a

young bear, and have all my troubles to come!"

"I don't much admire the tune!" observed his faithful follower, drily.

The cornet shrugged his shoulders, and fell into a profound reverie.

At the very commencement of the fray, Mortimer had glided out of the room and taken shelter in his own chamber—where the unfortunate youth, however, was not permitted long to remain in peace: despite the lesson they had received, his drunken companions were determined to have a victim. Marshall remembered how he had turned the laugh against him at dinner, and urged them on: so, by way of winding up the evening, they resolved upon tossing him in a blanket.

"Toss him in a blanket, by all means!" exclaimed Lord Peapod, whose left eye promised to change color before morning. "The little sneak—he was the first to cut!"

This very gentlemanly project was carried into execution, amid the jests and sneers of the poor lad's companions. At every fresh bound he made in the air their shouts of drunken laughter and obscene remarks increased. The impotent rage and cries of their victim almost consoled them for their previous disappointment with Clement Foster.

"I'll endure it no longer!" cried Mortimer, half mad with shame.

"One, two, three!" cried the regimental bully, calling time.

And up went the cornet once more.

"I'll write to the general!" exclaimed the cornet, as soon as he could draw his breath.

"One, two, three!" repeated the captain, and the exercise was renewed.

"Demand a court-martial!"

This threat—which they well knew he dared not execute—was received with a general shout of laughter by his tormentors.

"Court-martial!" repeated Marsh; "why you would be cashiered!"

"Or forced to sell out!" added Trevanian.

"You were drunk the first night at mess!" observed the captain.

"And you every night!" retorted the exasperated boy, whose rage was now excited to the highest pitch: the reproaches of his friends, the injury to his future prospects—everything except the galling insult to which he was being subjected was forgotten.

Just as the drunken officers were about to toss him in the blanket for the fourth time, he sprang to the ground, at the risk of breaking his neck, and, with a countenance flushed with passion, advanced towards the ringleader of the party.

"*You are a coward!*" he said, fixing his eyes upon his tormentor—who replied only by a coarse laugh; "I demand satisfaction!"

"You shall have it!" shouted the drunkards.

"Toss him again!" exclaimed the captain.

The officers gathered around him with the intention of repeating their outrage. Mortimer cast a hopeless glance—he had not a friend amongst them.

"Pitch him in!" hiccupped Lord Peapod.

"And up with him!" added Trevanian.

"At least," exclaimed the cornet, "I will not be the only one who shall have occasion to remember this night's work! Bully and coward!" he added, suddenly darting forward and striking Marshall a violent blow in the face; "for the honor of the cloth you wear, resent it, if you dare!"

At this unexpected act of decision and courage, the majority of the party became suddenly sobered; to do them justice, they admired his spirit. They were Englishmen, after all, and could sympathise with the pluck of their victim. Not so the captain; livid and speechless with rage and astonishment, he stood for an instant like a man who had been suddenly paralysed, then raised his hand to return the blow.

There was a murmur of "Shame—shame!" and "Too bad!" Even Lord Peapod began to feel that their fun had been carried too far—for, after all, Mortimer was a gentleman.

The ruffian drew back.

"I shall find a friend who will see me through this affair!" observed the cornet, whose passion had by this time considerably cooled.

"I shall be happy to be that friend, if Mr. Mortimer will permit me!" exclaimed Clement Foster, advancing from the end of the corridor, where he had been an unobserved spectator of the greater part of the scene we have described; "I cannot boast of any great experience in such matters; but the little I possess is very much at his service!"

A deep blush suffused the cheeks of the young officer, as he grasped the hand thus generously extended to him. He recollected with self-reproach the unworthy part he had so lately enacted towards him.

"Enough, sir!" said the bully, haughtily; "I shall expect to hear from you in the morning! I am not much accustomed to such child's play!" he added, alluding to the youth of his antagonist and his second.

"No matter! For once I will indulge it!"

"The sarcastic smile faded from the lips of our hero as he coolly observed that, "from the extraordinary scenes which had

enacted that night, both in the corri-
and his own room, he should have
ght Captain Marshall perfectly at home
ild's play!"

Bravo, young tape!" shouted Lord
od, whose momentary fit of sobriety
nce more yielded to the influence of
arge quantity of champagne he had
; "not a bad *fella*, after all! But
where you strike another time!" he
l, rubbing his eye; "never mark your
unless with the irons! You under-
!!"

ow—decidedly low!" muttered Wal-
revanian.

ie voice of the adjutant was now heard.
old soldier was making his rounds, and
psy band for many reasons felt anxious
oid him. He was regarded as a mar-
by all the young men in the regiment,
vith dislike by the seniors—from the
ommanding officer down to the junior
in; for he never joined in any of their
s, and was so punctual in the execu-
of his duty, that they had long since
ned all hope of catching him tripping.
as the only man in the regiment whom
hall feared as well as hated.

ıs this ridiculous affair is to be settled
here," he said, "not a word more is
sary! I presume, sir, you understand
eserve usual amongst gentlemen on
occasions?"

is was addressed to Clement Foster,
replied only by a bow. His blood was
ughly up, and he feared to trust his
h.

Not a word to the adjutant!" observed
Peapod.

am no informer, my lord!" replied
ero, impatiently.

the adjutant passed the group, he
d earnestly at his old friend General
ere's *protegée*, in the hope, perhaps, of
of some service to him. From the
blanket and the state of the corridor
essed what had taken place; but the
enance of the *new man* continued im-
ble.

e usual salutation between *brother of-*
took place, and the lately noisy party
ated for the night—Mortimer accom-
ng Clement to his room, to talk over
him the necessary arrangements for
orning.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,
Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man
Some frolic drunkard reeling from a feast,
Provokes a broil, and stabs him for a jest.
DR. JOHNSON.

THOSE who are acquainted with the routine of military life will readily understand that very few events occurred in the regiment which did not reach the ears of the commanding officer. Colonel Barratt, on his return from the castle, where he had passed the evening, was informed of everything that had transpired in his absence. With all his weakness, aristocratic prejudice, and vanity, he was keenly alive to the consequences of a duel taking place under such circumstances: court of inquiry, exposure, the "infernal papers"—as he invariably designated the press—and a vast amount of obloquy, if not disgrace. Before retiring for the night, he sent a message to Captain Marshall to be with him by eight the following morning: he was determined that the affair should be arranged.

When his visitor arrived, he found the colonel *en robe de chambre*, sipping his chocolate.

"Bad affair!" exclaimed the latter, in a querulous tone, which showed how much he was annoyed; "discipline is going to the dogs!"

There were many, and not incompetent judges, who thought it had already arrived there.

"Tell me all about it, Marshall!" he added; "how did it occur?"

The captain gave a not very exaggerated account of the night's proceeding, making it as favorable to himself as possible—a coloring which his commanding officer duly allowed for.

"And what do you intend to do?" demanded Colonel Barratt, who had listened attentively to every word.

"Send a bullet through the heart of the young jackass!" replied the bully, in a tone of ferocity which very much shocked the good taste of the aristocratic commander, who considered an emotion of any kind exceedingly vulgar.

"You must do nothing of the sort, Marshall!" quietly observed the colonel; "you forget Mortimer is but a boy! His uncle, Lord Pomeroy, is in the household! The affair would make a stir, and all that sort of thing! Had it been the new man, I probably should not have interfered; but Lord Pomeroy's nephew! It won't do—won't do!"

"But he struck me!" urged the captain.

"You must have expected that he would do so at some time or other!" observed the

colonel coolly; "he is a young man of good family!"

Marshall, who was a mere *parvenu*, and had risen by alternately flattering and bullying his way in the service, bit his lips in silence. He felt that his influence over the boys, as he termed them, would be at an end if he permitted such an insult as the one he had received to pass without a meeting.

"I really don't see how I can pass over such an insult!" he replied.

"*I have considered!*" interrupted his commanding officer; "and I tell you that the affair must be arranged! You understand me—*must!* I have nothing but plague and anxiety: the regiment is in a dreadful state, and the officers worse than the men! There's my nephew," he added, "ill from a bilious attack—at least so the doctor reports—the consequence of last night's orgie, I suspect—won't be fit for service these five days!"

His visitor could scarcely repress a smile: he had calculated that it would take about that time to restore his lordship's eye to its proper color.

"Reflect!" he said; "the ridiculous position I shall be placed in!"

A slight shrug of the colonel's shoulders intimated how very little that consideration weighed with him.

"I shall be laughed at!"

"Laugh with them!"

"Cut!"

"For a short time, possibly!" coolly observed the commander: "but the affair will soon blow over. I tell you, Marshall," he continued, in a more serious tone, "that it cannot be! Sorry to disappoint your very natural desire of shooting the young puppy—but I am compelled to do it—and unless you give me your word, I must order you under arrest! You know the consequence—your name is not in the best odor at the Horse Guards! An inquiry once commenced, heaven only knows where it may end: it might possibly reach even ——"

"To yourself!" exclaimed the captain, finishing the sentence for him.

Colonel Barratt listened to this little ebullition of temper with an indulgent smile: he had three relatives in the Upper House and several in the Commons. What could he possibly have to fear beyond the annoyance of the thing? Still he did not wish to urge the patience of his visitor beyond its legitimate bounds—for, once thoroughly roused, he knew him to be capable of any amount of indiscretion: so, after many pros and cons, a compromise was at last effected, by which the honor of the bully should be spared, and the life of Cornet Mortimer assured.

With this understanding they parted.

When Clement Foster waited upon Captain Marshall, an hour later, he was received by that gentleman with the frigid politeness which etiquette prescribes as the rule of conduct on similar occasions. He was referred to Lieutenant Marsh, to settle the time and place of meeting—which was ultimately fixed for eleven, in the riding-school: an arrangement which insured them against the probability of observation—as the officers were accustomed to use it as a shooting-gallery.

"Where do intend to hit him, Marshall?" said Walter Trevanian, as Mortimer and his second entered the riding-school.

"Haven't made up my mind yet!"

"In the heart, I hope!" added the first speaker; "it's little use aiming at his head—no vital part there!" And, with a cold smile at his own heartless jest, he drew on one side whilst the seconds measured the ground.

The officers who had assisted in the frolic of the preceding night, with the exception of Lord Peapod, were every one present.

"Bets were freely offered, ten to three, that the captain hit his boyish antagonist, whose firm demeanor, *par parenthèse*, considerably raised him in their good opinion.

"Heaven bless you, my dear fellow!" whispered Clement Foster, as he placed the pistol in the hand of his principal; "you have nothing to reproach yourself with!"

As he drew aside to give the signal, he observed that Marshall was the paler of the two.

The handkerchief fell, and at the same instant the bullet of the cornet whizzed past the ear of the bully, without wounding him, but sufficiently near to give him an unpleasant sensation. To the astonishment of every one present, the captain deliberately raised his arm and fired in the air. As he was known to be a dead shot, a murmur of surprise broke from the assistants, who little imagined how great an effort the enforced act of generosity cost him. Advancing towards his antagonist, he held out his hand.

"You are a brave fellow, Mortimer!" he exclaimed, with well-affected frankness; "and we have carried our jests too far! Forget the occurrence of last night, as I do!"

The cornet grasped his hand with unsuspecting confidence.

As a matter of course, after such a *denouement*, the duty of the seconds was at an end. All but Clement praised the generous conduct of the bully: he had noticed the change in his features at the moment of firing—the visible struggle which the effort cost him.

"More prudent than generous!" he thought.

"Your introduction to the regiment, Mr. Foster," observed Lieutenant Marsh, "has doubtless surprised you; but we are better than you took us for!"

Our hero drily acknowledged that it had a little surprised him.

The door of the riding-school was unbarred, and the officers present began to amuse themselves by firing at the target. Captain Marshall, as if to impress a yet stronger conviction of his great generosity upon all present, fired twice at the ace of hearts. The first time his ball struck it in the corner—the second, within half an inch of the centre.

A murmur of admiration followed the exploit, which, after what had just taken place, Clement Foster considered in very questionable taste.

"Magnificent shot!" exclaimed Walter Trevanian, fixing his eyes upon our hero, to mark the effect it had produced: "you will find few to equal it!"

"Perhaps not!"

"I'd give you five year's practice, and then bet fifty to ten you did not come within a yard of it! Come," he continued, annoyed by the *parvenu's* quiet smile; "I bet you a hundred to five you don't hit the card!"

"On one condition, done!" replied Clement.

"Condition! Oh, play or pay!"

"It is not that!"

"What, then?" demanded Trevanian, impatiently.

"That, to ease my conscience of the reproach of robbing you, and assure yourself a chance of not losing your money, you bet me another hundred to five that I do not send a bullet through the pip in the centre of the card!"

The bet was instantly taken, and considerable curiosity was excited, to see how the lawyer's clerk would acquit himself; some thought it was a mere piece of braggadocio—others, that he merely wished to display a vulgar indifference to money, by losing it.

The pistols were loaded and placed beside him. The first time he fired without the least hesitation, and struck the card so near the centre that Walter Trevanian began to feel a certain amount of uneasiness for the fate of the second hundred he had so foolishly risked.

"One!" said Clement.

With a little more deliberation, he raised his hand and fired the second time.

"Two!" he exclaimed.

"Done it, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Lieutenant Marsh.

Both Marshall and Trevanian exchanged glances of mortification and rage; each mentally asked how far it might be prudent to quarrel with a man who possessed such extraordinary skill in the use of his weapon; they were not the only persons present to whom a similar question had presented itself.

Walter Trevanian muttered something about his having to ride to town to visit his banker.

"At your perfect convenience!" replied Clement Foster, coolly.

From the riding-school the party adjourned to the parade-ground, a general agreement being first entered into that the affair of the duel was to be kept strictly private; and, as a necessary consequence, the circumstances which led to it; by which clever contrivance, everything like exposure was avoided. Captain Marshall obtained credit for a generosity of conduct which he did not deserve; Colonel Barratt got rid of what might have proved an awkward inquiry, and Mortimer and our hero of further direct persecution. We say direct—for under the pretext of duty, every possible annoyance was inflicted; but so guarded were those who thus abused their authority, that it was impossible for their victims to resent it.

"Well, Marshall," said Colonel Barratt, one-day after parade; "you will admit that my system is better than yours!"

"Perhaps!" replied the bully, doubtfully.

"There is no 'perhaps' in the case!" continued his superior. "Confess, now—have we not harassed the young puppies in every way?"

"I should have preferred shooting them!"

"*Wait!*" replied the commander.

"Wait!" repeated the captain, with a look of astonishment.

"The regiment is about to be sent on active service, to join Wellington in the Peninsula!" whispered the colonel. "Campaigning is very different from home quarters! No Horse Guards—no press to bully one there! Remember," he added, "this is in perfect confidence between us! *Now am I right?*"

"Quite!" replied Marshall. "I acknowledge the superiority of your tactics!"

The commanding officer smiled as he retired to his quarters. He had a little scheme of his own to carry out, in which he trusted to find his subaltern a useful agent. As it did not affect either our hero or Mortimer, it will be time enough to allude to it in its proper place.

On the evening of the day on which the duel had taken place, Walter Trevanian obtained a day's leave of absence under pretext of business with his banker. Al-

though the allowance he received from his father was a large one, it fell far short of his expenditure. The sum he had so foolishly lost to Clement Foster was more than he could pay. He well knew that it was useless to apply to Lady Trevanian—he had long since exhausted both her patience and resources. His credit was at a heavy discount with the money-brokers; and nothing was left for him but an appeal to the liberality of his father for an immediate advance. Unfortunately it was neither the first, second, nor third appeal, since he had entered the army, that his dissipation and extravagance had compelled him to make.

"Not a shilling!" said the baronet, sternly, after having heard his son's request. "I told you when I lately assisted you that it must be the last!"

"Then I must raise it by *post obit!*" replied the young man; "for the money I must and will have! I can endure anything rather than the sneer of the puppy to whom I lost."

"Gambling again?" sighed Sir Richard.

"You cannot expect me, my dear father, to act with your prudence and discernment! Experience is not to be purchased in a day or a year! The circumstances under which I lost it are so extraordinary, that had you been present you could scarcely have blamed me!"

"Met with an older hand than yourself, I presume?"

"Older and younger! Will you listen to me? The honor of your son—*your only son*," continued the Guardsman, "must be dear to you!"

"It has been very *dear* to me!" replied his parent, in a sarcastic tone; "shall I run up the amount it has cost me? It is now rather more than three years since you entered the army, during which time I have thrice paid your debts—allowed you——"

"I am perfectly aware of your liberality, and my own folly!" interrupted Walter Trevanian; "but if you will only hear me patiently, I flatter myself I can convince you that in the present affair, at least, I am not so much to blame!"

The baronet declared that he was perfectly prepared to hear any statement he chose to make—mentally reserving to himself, no doubt, the right to believe just so much of it as he thought proper. At first he listened with cold but polite attention—for, to do him justice, the manners of the ex-diplomat were unexceptionable. At the name of Clement Foster, he betrayed signs of considerable interest.

"The son of the baronet?" he demanded.

"The son of some rascally old lawyer in *the Temple!" replied* Walter; "who, having more money and pride than common sense, has forced his hopeful cub into the service! You see, sir," he added, in a tone half submissive and half remonstrative, "the impossibility of my remaining indebted to such a fellow!"

"Well!" said Sir Richard Trevanian, after a few moments reflection; "on certain conditions, I will extricate you from this humiliating embarrassment!"

"Impose them!" exclaimed the young man.

"The first is, that you cultivate the friendship of this Clement Foster!"

The young Guardsman could not repress his astonishment.

"The next is, that you introduce him here!" continued the speaker, without paying the least attention to his surprise; "lead him to gamble—dissipation, in short, train him in the career of folly you have persevered in yourself for the last three years!"

"What! I cultivate the intimacy of a *parvenu* and insolent young puppy—who—— My dear father, you cannot be serious!"

"You will find me so!" was the old man's reply.

"In that case," said his son, rising to depart, "I must seek the money somewhere else! I have avoided the Jews as long as I can, but needs must when necessity drives!"

"Walter!" exclaimed the baronet, "do you prize the reversion of the Trevanian estates?"

"As my life!" replied his son.

"Did I ever deceive you?"

"No, sir! But I cannot comprehend——"

"Hear me!" continued the old man, seriously; "and reflect well before you decide! As for the estates, not one acre of them, I solemnly assure you, will be yours unless you follow my advice!"

"But how, Sir Richard?"

"Ask me not how or why!" interrupted his father, impetuously. "It is a bitter, humiliating *necessity*—but it is not the less one! Be guided by my instructions, and I will not only advance you the sum you require, but five hundred pounds more!"

Walter Trevanian reflected for a few seconds, but the struggle between pride and interest was a short one: he extended his hand to the baronet, and the compact was sealed.

Doubtless our readers have not forgotten the second copy of poor Edward Trevanian's will, which had been confided to the care of Mr. Foster.

The first act of the young Guardsman, on his return to Windsor, was to write a polite note to Clement Foster, inclosing him

the two hundred pounds and an invitation to wine with him in his rooms on the following evening.

"Come," said our hero, as he read the missive, "not so bad as I thought! I must find some means to let him win back the money he so foolishly lost!"

In order to carry out this generous wish, the frank-hearted boy broke the promise he had made to his father never to gamble.

How often has it not been said, through life, that first resolutions are the best? In a few days, Walter Trevanian not only won back the sum he had originally lost, but three hundred more.

CHAPTER XLIV.

> What could I more?
> warned thee—I admonished thee—foretold
> The danger, and the lurking enemy
> That lay in wait. Beyond this had been force—
> And force upon free-will hath here no place.
>
> MILTON.

As a natural consequence of the intimacy between Walter Trevanian and his intended dupe, each was introduced to the family and the friends of the other. The favorable impression on certain parts of the families appeared to be mutual. Miss Trevanian was delighted with her brother's friend, whom she invariably welcomed with her latest-practised smiles and graces: even the old lawyer was pleased at the apparent friendship of the baronet's heir for his son. There were moments, perhaps, in which he inwardly regretted the secret of the will deposited with him. He felt for the disappointment which he foresaw must ensue upon its production on the death of Sir Richard, and considered it fortunate that he was bound not to disclose its existence till then.

The only person who disapproved of the connection was Martha. Women are seldom deceived in the estimate they form of character, where the welfare of those for whom they feel an interest is concerned; they are naturally more observant than men, and the trials of her early life had given her almost an intuitive power of reading the designs of those she studied.

The influence which Walter appeared to exercise over the once independent mind of her young favorite alarmed her. She had seen Clement rise and take his departure at the first word—nay, almost at the glance—of his new friend. She could not comprehend it—it gave her cause for reflection.

"He must be in his power!" she thought—and the conviction [illegible] bad accordingly.

Both the young m[illegible] with her, and Clement [illegible] to escort her and Mis[illegible] theatre. When the e[illegible] luded to, Walter Trevan[illegible] handed manner, regrette[illegible] it was impossible.

"You speak for yourself only, I presume?" replied the lady, with a forced smile.

"For myself and friend!" continued the young man; "my mother gives a ball to-night, and Clem., as well as myself promised to be there!"

The victim of so much seeming friendship colored to the temples, and muttered something about his having forgotten the engagement.

"Do not apologise!" said Martha; "if Miss Wyndham will forgive you, I am sure I can! You know I care but little for pleasure, and seldom indulge in it!"

To the grateful heart of the poor boy this sounded very like a reproach.

"Your engagement to Lady Trevanian," continued the speaker, after a pause, "does not extend beyond the ball?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Clement.

"In that case, I shall expect to see you to breakfast in the morning, previous to your return to Windsor! Remember," she added, in a playful tone, "I shall accept no excuse this time!"

Her young friend assured her he would be punctual. His companion looked as if he expected to be included in the invitation—in fact, he rather desired it; and, independent of his reluctance to leave his dupe alone with his friends, he had taken a strong fancy to the governess—who, in the hope of exciting the jealousy of her boyish lover—as she called our hero—encouraged the flirtation.

Shortly afterwards the young men took their leave.

"What can that old woman want with him?" Walter mentally asked himself. "Can she suspect anything?"

Clement Foster was secretly wondering why his companion should have descended to utter a falsehood. Neither of them were engaged at a ball at Lady Trevanian's: it was the first time he had heard of it, and he blushed at his own weakness at having yielded to his influence—the secret of which, however, is soon told. Independent of the two hundred pounds which he intended to lose, his disinterested *friend* held his I O U for a thousand pounds, which, in the course of one month, he had won from him at cards.

It was an understood arrangement be-

thop on them that the money was not to be paid till our hero came of age; but Walter, acting under the instructions of his father, had decided not to wait till then.

"I dare say you wonder," he said, as the hackney-coach conveyed them towards the residence of the baronet, "why I took you from Harley Street?"

Clement confessed that it had excited his surprise.

"The fact is, my dear fellow," continued the unprincipled gamester, "that I am placed in a deuced unpleasant position!"

"How?"

"Sir Richard refuses to advance me a shilling of my allowance, and I have been very unlucky lately! I lost three hundred to the colonel, two to my old friend Beresford: and debts of honor," he added, with marked emphasis, "*must be paid!*"

His dupe felt the color rush to his very temples. Mentally he cursed his folly, which had placed him at the mercy of such a man.

"Besides," continued the speaker, "the awkwardness of my own position, I feel for yours! It would be all right if you were of age!"

"Do you doubt it?" demanded Clement, almost fiercely.

"Not in the least, my dear boy!" replied the aristocratic sharper; "it's not that! It may as well out at once—the fact is, I have parted with your I O U!"

"Contrary to you promise?"

"Could not help it! I knew your generosity and friendship would forgive me! What could I do? You owed me the money, and I owed the greater portion of the sum to others! I could not *shelter myself under the plea of being a minor!*"

Every word the heartless fellow uttered was calculated, and produced the effect he desired—it stung his victim almost to madness! Should it reach his father's ears, it would break the old man's heart.

"Who holds it?" he demanded, in hollow tone.

"A rascal who is reasonable enough," replied Walter, "provided you give him his terms—which, to speak the truth are exorbitant enough! I have never seen him: Wilson got it done for me, and without much difficulty—your name and expectations were so well known in the City!"

"His name?" repeated Clement, impatiently.

His companion handed him a card.

No sooner had our hero obtained the address of the man who held his promise to pay the sum he had lost, than he pulled the check-string, and ordered the driver to stop. *Walter regarded him* with surprise. The *boy who had so lately* obeyed his word or glance, appeared suddenly to have recovered his independence, and once more to think and act for himself.

"What the deuce do you mean?" he demanded; "this is not St. James's Square!"

"I am not going to Lady Trevanian's tonight!" was the cold reply.

"Nonsense!"

"Call it what you will!" continued Clement; "you have heard my determination!"

"You are angry with me!" exclaimed the hypocrite, in a tone of vexation; "curse the I O U! I wish I had never seen it!"

"On the contrary," replied the young man, "I forgive you freely! In parting with it, you have removed a weight both from my heart and mind! *I am no longer your debtor!*"

"But still my friend!"

"Friend!" repeated Foster, with a bitter smile; "reserve the word for those with whom it is not so hackneyed as it has been with me! When you apply the title of friend to me, for you I blush—for myself I laugh; but for friendship's sacred name I mourn! Henceforth we are [illegible] friends as men can be who despise each other!"

"But I do not despise you!" exclaimed Walter Trevanian, who for many reasons wished to avoid a quarrel with his dupe. In the first place, his father had recommended him to do so; in the second, his having won so large a sum from a mere boy, and raised money upon his I O U, contrary to promise, would, if once it became known, be severely blamed by his brother officers. Marshall, for one, would be sure to swear that he had made friends with the lawyer's clerk to have the plucking of the pigeon wholly to himself.

"I repeat it!" he said, "my dear fellow! I do not despise you!"

"Then you are more indulgent to my weakness," observed Clement, raising his cap with freezing politeness, "than I am to your broken promise!"

"But you forgave it!"

"We generally forgive that which we despise! Good night! Henceforth, sir, we are strangers to each other!"

With these words our hero turned upon his heel and left the mortified and humbled Trevanian overwhelmed with confusion and rage.

"Curse him!" he muttered, between his teeth; "let him go to Stork, and try to settle it! Let him employ his rhetoric upon him, and see what effect it will have! It's a hazardous game my father has given me to play," he added; "but at any rate I have not baulked him!"

With this reflection he directed the coachman to proceed on his way to St. James's Square.

Those who recollect the painful impression, the sickening sensation which oppressed their hearts the first time they discovered that they have been deceived, will sympathise with the feelings of Clement Foster. It was not the money he cared about—that, he trusted, might be procured; it was the shock it would prove to his father—his fond, confiding father—should the tale of his indiscretion reach his ears.

Bitterly did he regret his imprudence—and yet in the midst of that regret he felt a singular satisfaction in finding himself free from the painful influence which Walter Trevanian had exercised over him—an influence which had chafed his naturally proud, independent spirit.

"At last," he muttered, as he hurried towards the park, with the intention of collecting his scattered thoughts, "I shall no longer have anything to conceal—the loathsome weight will be removed from my heart and brain! The lesson has been a painful, but I trust not a useless one!"

Sometimes he thought of consulting General De Vere—but a nice sense of honor forbade him. Walter had broken faith with him, but that did not justify him in his own opinion, in breaking faith with Walter: each had given his word to the other that their gaming transactions should be kept secret from the world.

Our hero at last decided upon seeing Stork, the holder of the I O U, in the morning; but on referring to the card which his false friend had given him, he found the name of the money-lender, but not the address.

"It's of little consequence!" he thought; "Griffiths knows him!"

Great was the astonishment of the head clerk, when the son of his employer entered the office at an unusually early hour. He fancied, from his pale cheek, and a certain appearance about the eye, that the young soldier had been dissipating.

"My father arrived, Griffiths?" inquired the young man.

"Not yet, sir!"

Clement passed on to a private room, after requesting the managing man to follow.

"Griffiths!" he said, "are you acquainted with a Mr. Stork?"

"Stork—Stork! Serjeant Stork, sir?"

"No! The man I mean is a money-lender!"

"The money-lender!" repeated the astonished Mr. Griffiths. "Master—Mr. Clement, I mean—what can you want with him?"

"I wish to see him!"

The head clerk looked as if he had received a sudden shock.

"Bad acquaintance!" he said; "bad acquaintance!"

"But he is no acquaintance of mine!" replied our hero. "I have never seen him, or had the least transaction with the man—but a friend of mine has. I will write," he added; "and like a good creature, you must find the fellow out, and bring me his answer!"

At the word "write," the little grey eyes of the managing man gave a sudden twinkle.

"Certainly, Mr. Clement!" he said; "anything to oblige you!"

The note was accordingly written.

CHAPTER XLV.

As thistles wear the softest down,
To hide their prickles till they're grown,
And then declare themselves, and tear
Whatever ventures to come near:
So a smooth knave does greater feats
Than one that idly rails and threats.

BUTLER.

MR. SAMUEL GRIFFITHS's knowledge was not confined to the nice distinctions which would split a hair—the quirks, subtleties and complicated mechanism of the law: in addition to his professional attainments, he was up to a thing or two, which the world, in its ignorant, unphilosophical prejudices, by common assent has agreed to brand as dishonorable—if not positively dishonest. For instance, he could turn a letter inside out, read the contents, and then re-turn it, without breaking the seal—an accomplishment taught him in early life by his father, one of the confidential clerks in the Post Office. The same worthy personage had instructed him to take fac-similes of seals, to imitate signatures, copy writing—in short, like a good parent, imparted all that he knew himself.

"Be humble, Samuel!" the old man used to say; "honey catches more flies than vinegar! Make friends with everybody—for one can never tell in this world whom they may want! Imitate the industrious ant—pick up every grain of information you can: ten to one but you find a use for it! Hear all and tell nothing!"

Reared with such maxims from his cradle, no wonder that the instincts of the boy led him—when old enough to choose a profession—to the law. He took to it as naturally as ducklings do to water—it was his element.

Putting into practice the lessons which had been instilled into his youthful mind—

the only inheritance, by-the-by, which he ever received from his respectable progenitor—Sam, as he was familiarly called, when he first entered the office of Mr. Foster, by his obliging manners, humility, and attention to business, gradually rose into favor both with his principal and the senior clerks. In three years' time he was addressed as Samuel—then Mr. Samuel; and on the death of the managing man, whose desk he succeeded to, was promoted to the dignity of "Mr. Griffiths."

From that day he dreamed of nothing less than a partnership, and bitterly did he hate the high-spirited boy who seemed the only bar to the accomplishment of his wishes. Everything he could do with safety to disgust him with the profession to which his father was so anxious to devote him, he did; the driest work of the office was invariably given him; he hated him as base minds generally hate those whom they either fear or feel conscious they have injured.

As long as his employer and son remained friends, he knew that he had little chance of succeeding in his projects; but could he once create a breach between them—wound the old man in his affection and confidence in Clement—he felt assured the energy of the lawyer would give way—a gradual distaste for business must follow—assistance become necessary: and where was he to look for it, except in his senior clerk, who was as well acquainted with the details and intricacies of his clients' affairs as the old man himself?

To render him unfit for his professional labors, it was necessary to give him a sorrow to brood over.

With such feelings and projects, no wonder that Mr. Griffiths regarded the commission our hero had intrusted him with as a fortunate event.

With a dexterity which one must have practised to describe correctly, he succeeded, after a series of delicate manipulations, in turning the letter inside out, without the the slightest injury to the seal, and then made himself master of its contents.

"Wants to see Stork!" he muttered; "begs him to make an appointment, and not to mention or negociate the I O U till after their interview! Humph! The fool has been gambling—lost his money, and dreads lest it should reach his father's ears! *It shall reach them!*" he added, with a low chuckle; "I will take care of that! But I must learn the particulars—everything—everything!"

The same skill which had ministered to the gratification of his dishonest curiosity *enabled him to restore* the letter to its former condition—*not* a crease in the paper betrayed the operation it had gone through. Could the spirit of the Post Office clerk have witnessed the dexterity of the inheritor of his peculiar talent, doubtless it would have expressed the intensity of its satisfaction by a benignant smile.

Benjamin Stork, the money-lender, resided in a very small house in Red Lion Street, Holborn; ostensibly he was a bookseller: we say ostensibly—for a few dusty volumes, chiefly on medicine and divinity, were placed in the window of his shop, the door of which was kept locked the greater part of the day—a sign that his customers were not very numerous. To his neighbors the manner in which he carried on his business was a mystery. The baker who lived directly opposite was ready to state on oath, that for the space of twenty years he had never witnessed the arrival or departure of a single packet of goods. The tailor next door fancied that he dealt in curiosities; whilst the landlord of the public-house at the corner used to declare that, in his opinion, he was neither more nor less than a spy of the French Emperor. Probably he was assisted in arriving at this conclusion by the pertinacity with which the gentleman had invariably refused the honor of being elected a member of the society of Trumps and Buffers, held in the back parlor of his establishment.

Had they known his real trade, instead of abusing and avoiding, how his neighbors would have worshipped him—for Mammon is still the idol of the earth. Like Eastern slaves, they would have kissed the ground at his approach, been convulsed at his jests; he might have been the oracle of the Trumps and Buffers; but Benjamin had no such ambition: he kept his pursuits a secret—probably on the same principle that the fox seeks its prey at a distance from its den.

On reaching the shop in Red Lion Street, Mr. Griffiths had to ring twice before obtaining admission. The door at last was opened to him by a tall, thin, sanctified-looking personage, apparently about sixty years of age.

This was Mr. Stork, the money-lender, who looked like a man capable of taking cent. per cent. from his victims, and justifying the transaction by a text from Scripture. He was dressed in an old-fashioned suit of black, threadbare, but scrupulously clean; his iron-grey hair, which time had considerably thinned on either temple, was parted in the middle, and carefully brushed back so as to make the most of a forehead unusually narrow and receding; he had thick, bushy brows, projecting over a pair of small grey eyes—the only peculiarity about which was a habit their owner had contracted of peering from the corners of

them at those he conversed with, instead of looking them full in the face.

A white cravat, black worsted stockings, with shoes and silver buckles, completed the old man's costume.

"Can I see Mr. Stork?" demanded his visitor, perfectly aware, as he did so, that the gentleman in question was before him.

"I am Mr. Stork!" was the reply, uttered in a soft, oleaginous tone of voice; "may I ask your pleasure with me?"

"You are acquainted with Mr. Foster?" said Mr. Griffiths.

"Of the Temple?"

"No—his son!"

"Not personally!" answered the money-lender; "but I presume I soon shall be!"

"I bring a letter from him!"

"Walk in!" said the old man, opening wide the door; "I like not to speak on business in the public streets!"

As he led the way to the little parlor at the back of the shop, the clerk fancied he could detect a very faint smile of satisfaction upon the thin, shrewd features of the speaker.

"I can have no confidence with this man!" he thought; "he would outwit half the lawyers at Westminster!"

Had he added the Old Bailey as well, he would not have been far wrong.

Mr. Stork perused the letter twice—the contents appeared to embarrass him. The fact was, he knew not where to appoint the interview which Clement had requested, as he expected a call from Sir Richard Trevanian, and it would not do for them to meet.

"Where is your young master staying?" he inquired.

"He is no master of mine!" replied Griffiths, bluntly; "I am his father's managing clerk, and I don't know where he is staying!"

The money-lender made a thousand apologies for the mistake: it was his policy to stand well with all men.

"I can't see him here!" he said; "I expect parties who do not wish to be recognised!"

His visitor suggested a tavern. The old man shook his head.

"Why not come to the office?" added the clerk.

Stork muttered something about the young gentleman's father.

"That need not prevent you!" urged the messenger, who had his own reasons for desiring the meeting to take place in the Temple; "Mr. Foster has a consultation with Serjeants Blether and Backbite at three! There is *my private room*, which is very much at your and Mr. Clement's service!"

After a few moments' reflection the offer was accepted and the appointment made.

When our hero was informed of the arrangement, his first feeling was of alarm, lest his father should see and recognise his visitor. Nor was it till Mr. Griffiths had repeatedly assured him that they were personally unknown to each other, and explained how Mr. Foster had a most important engagement at that very hour, that his fears subsided, and he became reconciled to the place of meeting.

"What sort of a fellow is this Stork?" he asked.

The managing man slightly raised his shoulders.

"Speak out, man!" exclaimed Clement, impatiently.

"Hard sir!" replied his envoy; "heart and hand like a vice! Nothing escapes him! I pity your friend, if he has fallen into such clutches! He would no more mind extorting twenty, thirty, fifty per cent., than I should filing a declaration! Thank heaven," he added, with a hypocritical smile, "that you have nothing to fear from him on your own account! Your father detests money-lenders and gambling! I don't know which he holds in aversion most!"

The despicable trickster smiled at the look of agony which rested for an instant upon the handsome features of the youth. It was not that Clement Foster had any childish terror of his father's anger, or that he anticipated reproaches for his indiscretion; it was the blow, the wound it would give to the confidence which had hitherto existed between them. Bitterly did he regret his indiscretion, and mentally vowed that no earthly inducement should tempt him to touch cards or dice again.

"I will direct the clerks to show Mr. Stork to my room the instant he arrives!" observed the hypocrite; "you need be under no apprehension, even should your father return! He is sure not to seek me: he knows that I must be at the Common Pleas—the old cause of Grindem and Nibble comes on again! But I forget," he added, with what was intended to be a friendly smile; "you have nothing to do with law now!"

It was a truth that the cause the speaker alluded to was to be tried that very day; but it was equally true he had not the least intention to be present.

Finding that he should have some time upon his hands before the interview with the money-lender, our hero left the office to breathe the fresh air and collect his thoughts in the garden of the Temple. So great

was his agitation, that he quite forgot his promise to breakfast with Martha in Harley street.

No sooner had he taken his departure, than Mr. Griffiths bolted the door of the room, and began to put the project he had secretly formed into execution. For reasons best known to himself, he had determined to be present at the meeting which was about to take place—and the means were unfortunately at hand.

On either side of the chimney, in two dingy recesses, stood a large, old-fashioned book-case, with glass doors, and faded green curtains. One contained his law books; the other papers, drafts of deeds, and all the miscellaneous waifs and strays of a lawyer's office. These he speedily removed, and piled in one of the closets—then left the room to give instructions to the junior clerks.

Clement Foster was pacing up and down the room so *disinterestedly* placed at his disposal by his father's managing man, when Mr. Stork was announced. The money-lender entered the apartment with that stealthy, cat-like step peculiar to animals of prey. The old man tried to look benevolent and meek, but a close observer might have detected, in the only half-subdued twinkle of his keen grey eye and the drawn-down corners of his thin lips, a feeling of self-confidence and great determination. After all, it was a mere boy he had to contend with.

"Lieutenant Trevanian," said our hero, in a firm tone, "tells me that, compelled by his necessities, he has transferred to you my acknowledgement of a debt of one thousand pounds!"

"*Acknowledgement!*" repeated Stork; "it is an I O U, and——"

"I am aware!" interrupted the young soldier; "did he tell you how he obtained it?"

"No!"

"I will inform you, then! At play—play which he urged—nay, almost forced upon me! When the paper you hold was signed, he pledged his word that—that the money should not be demanded till I became of age!"

"I have nothing to do with that!" drily observed the money-lender.

"You will wait?"

"Impossible!"

"You must!" exclaimed Clement, passionately; "you know that I shall be rich—have thousands at my command; more—am willing to pay handsomely for the delay! Name your conditions—I'll drive no *huckster's bargain* with you! But it is of *the utmost importance* to keep this transaction *a secret!*"

"I fear it will be impossible!" observed Mr. Stork.

"Impossible!" repeated our hero. "Do you know the consequence of that word? It will drive two beings to despair: a dear, kind father, whose hairs are grey in honor—a son whose promise to the best of parents has been broken! 'Tis not the sum!" he added, with increased earnestness. "The day I am of age I will bind myself to pay it twice over, in what penalty you please! Mark me—twice over!"

"The offer is a most liberal one, and——"

"You accept it?" eagerly demanded Clement.

"Alas, I have not the power!" replied the old man; "I am merely the agent of another in these transactions! Were the money mine, gladly would I wait!"

"Can I not see your employer?"

"No!" answered the usurer, hastily: "it is his pleasure to remain unknown! He has already advanced large sums—very large sums—to your friend Lieutenant Trevanian, on the reversion of the family estates; and, although rich, he is really inconvenienced for the money!"

"Are there no means?" exclaimed the intended victim, imploringly; "or is this merely a trick to enhance the conditions? Speak, man—speak boldly! Ask enough! There is no sacrifice I will recoil from to spare this sorrow to my father!"

"No sacrifice?" repeated Stork, lowering his voice.

"Not one!" impetuously answered Clement.

"Well," said the old man, deliberately, "perhaps—mind, I only say perhaps—I could point out a way! But no! it would be useless—you would not consent!"

"You do not know me," answered the young man, firmly, "or the devotion of which affection is capable! Do not keep me in suspense! If any spark of pity or feeling remains in your sordid heart, speak, and ease my tortured mind at once!"

Up to the present moment of their interview his visitor had remained seated near the table—whilst the speaker continued to pace the room with a restless step.

The money-lender pointed to a chair beside him, and motioned to our hero to take it.

"You promise me to be patient?" he began.

"Patient!" said Clement; "ay, patient as a martyr on the rack!"

"And pledge your honor never to reveal to Walter Trevanian—or indeed to any one else—the proposal I am about to make to you?"

It was given.

"Well, then," resumed the speaker, "as I before observed to you, the party who has employed me has lent large sums to your friend upon the reversion of the Trevanian estates! Since the last advance, a singular circumstance has reached his knowledge —a doubt has been created in his mind touching the value of the security!"

"The value! Is he not Sir Richard's heir?"

"He had an elder brother," continued Mr. Stork, "who died a few hours after coming of age! Previous to his death, he executed some deed or paper, which he placed in your father's hands with instructions that it was not to be opened till the decease of the present baronet!"

"I know!" exclaimed our hero; "I have seen it frequently! It is in the iron safe in my father's private office!"

The money-lender was not the only person who noted this imprudent speech.

"Could you procure me a sight of it," whispered the tempter; "intrust it to my hands but for one hour, the delay you ask for might easily be obtained!"

The young soldier started from his chair like one who had unexpectedly received an electric shock.

"More!" added the speaker; "the debt might be cancelled altogether!"

"What!" exclaimed Clement Foster, choking with shame and indignation that such an infamous proposal should have been addressed to him; "rob my father—stamp myself a villain, to conceal my folly! Look upon me!" he added, fiercely; "is fool or coward written upon my brow? Shame, man—shame! I see, too late," he continued, bitterly, "the snare that has been spread for me!"

Mr. Stork opened his pocket-book, took out the I O U and began reading it.

"I will expose you!" said the youth.

"Yourself, you mean!" coolly observed his visitor; "who would believe you—your father? No! He would consider it a mere paltry excuse for your broken promise never to play, suggested to you by your knowledge of the existence of the deed, and the fact of your having lost the money to Walter Trevanian! Besides," he continued, "you forget the pledge you made me before I entered on this matter!"

"True!" muttered Clement, in a tone of agony, "and, though given to a villain, it must be kept! I am in your power! You may torture me, but you shall not degrade me!"

"Can the fool be serious?" mentally wondered the old man; "or is he coy, and desirous of being persuaded to his wishes!"

"You spoke of robbery!" he resumed, aloud; "*and were I as fiery* as you are, it would be my cue to feel offended! But I know the world, and have patience with the temper, impetuosity, and weakness of youth! I merely asked to *see* the paper—to examine it—to have it intrusted to me for one hour—sixty fleeting minutes!"

"At the expiration of which time you promise to return it to me?"

"I swear it!" replied the money-lender, eagerly.

Clement Foster walked several times up and down the room, a prey to the most violent agitation; the tempter, who imagined that he had already caught him in his snare, urging him the while, and palliating the act by maxims of worldly sophistry.

"How many men in your position," he observed, "would rejoice in such an occasion of escaping the consequences of their folly—nay, it is almost an act of duty! Your father's peace of mind, you say, depends upon his being kept in ignorance of your having broken the promise you made never to gamble. Heaven will pardon the deceit," he added, with a hypocritical smile, "committed for a parent's good!"

"Peace, old man!" said our hero, between his clenched teeth; "lest I forget that in form at least you are human, and strangle you like some noxious reptile that has stung me! Your devilish logic falls hurtless on my reason! Would," he added, coloring deeply, "that your menaces were as powerless over my heart!"

"You consent, then?" whispered Mr. Stork.

"And when must this felon's deed be accomplished?" demanded the youth, avoiding a direct answer to his question.

"This very day!" replied the tempter, fearful lest reflection should intervene and baulk his project.

"Impossible! You must give me till to-morrow!"

"How impossible?" repeated the money-lender, impatiently.

"My father is absent, and has the keys of the iron safe with him!" replied Clement. "I must abstract them from his pillow like a thief in the night!" he added, bitterly. Should he wake"—he exclaimed, at the same time wringing his hands in agony at the terrible picture his imagination had conjured up—"should he awake, heaven have pity on me!"

"Little danger!" observed Mr. Stork, in a philosophical tone; "old men generally sleep soundly! Well, be it as you say, till to-morrow! Keep faith with me, or—— But there, you have sense enough to comprehend your position, and accept it! Where are we to meet—here!"

"Not for worlds! Give me an address where I may find you!"

The gentleman gave him his card.

"Till twelve," he said. "I shall expect you! Remember, not a minute beyond! On the last stroke of the clock, I start to lay the security I hold before your father!"

Taking up his hat, he made a low bow and left the room with the same cat-like, stealthy step he had entered it.

"Thank heaven, he is gone!" murmured the agitated youth. Had he remained longer, I should have murdered him! Oh, how I loathe myself," he continued, "for having listened to his infamous proposal—for having tampered for an instant in appearance with my honor! My mind is made up! My father may discard me, in his anger, from his heart—reproach me for my broken promise—my weakness; but he shall never scorn me for my baseness! Fool! dupe!—ay, that's the word—dupe!" he repeated: "dupe!"

As our readers doubtless suppose, Clement Foster never seriously entertained the thought of yielding to the temptation so artfully placed before him. His purpose in seeming to entertain it was to obtain time, that he might be the first to make known his folly to his father. In this case truly might it be said that his weakness had carried its punishment along with it!

With this resolve, he pulled his shako over his brow, and left the room so obligingly placed at his disposal by his father's confidential clerk.

Scarcely had the sound of his steps died away upon the stairs when the door of the bookcase was cautiously opened, and Mr. Griffiths stepped out from his place of concealment. He had overheard every word. After securing the door, to prevent interruption, he seated himself in the chair the money-lender had so lately vacated, and was for nearly an hour buried in profound reflection.

"A thousand pounds!" he muttered at last. "I should like to see the man whose virtue could resist a thousand pounds! But Master Clem. has not got the deed yet! That and the I O U must both be mine! But how—how?"

It was some time before the conscientious Mr. Griffiths could answer the question satisfactorily to himself; but he did so at last. Success seemed certain, unless some unforeseen influence interfered to baffle his design.

CHAPTER XLVI.

There is no friend like woman; in misfortune
Her tenderness consoles us, or her wit
Finds out the only remedy to heal it.
OLD PLAY.

DURING the entire day Martha had been expecting the visit of Clement Foster. He had promised her, and it was the first time she had ever known her preserver to break his word. More than ever confirmed in her idea that some misfortune had occurred to him, she had driven several times to the house of Mr. Foster to inquire for him, and each time been disappointed.

Friendship is even more persevering and enduring than love; probably because it is less liable to be misled by passion and impulse. It has also the advantage of being free from jealousy—the poisonous weed which so frequently grows side by side with the more tender flower.

The influence which Walter Trevanian so obviously exercised over her young favorite alarmed her, and she resolved if possible to obtain his confidence. Hers was not the idle curiosity which desires to sound the wound, but the nobler desire of pouring the balm to heal it.

"He is truth and honor itself!" she thought; "ingenuous as a child; he will neither refuse me his confidence nor deceive me!"

As she was about to quit the residence of the lawyer for the third time, she encountered our hero in the hall; his flushed cheek and haggard look alarmed her.

"Clement!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand to him, "is this your promise?"

"Pray pardon me!" he replied, forcing a smile; "it is not often that I break my word! You cannot reproach me," he added, "more than I do myself! But I must see my father before I return to Windsor."

"Your father is from home," observed Miss Mendez, "and will not return till six. We have nearly an hour!"

A sigh of mingled relief and disappointment escaped the lips of the young soldier; he was distracted between the desire he felt of relieving his tortured heart, and the dread of the effect which the confession he had to make might produce upon the mind of his parent.

"My carriage is at the door," continued the speaker; "I will only ask you to accompany me for one turn round the park—you must not refuse me!"

Clement hesitated—probably he guessed her design, and, with intuitive delicacy, would have avoided it.

"I have a service to ask!" she added.

"A service!" he repeated.

"A most important one!" said Martha.

Knowing her strict adherence to truth on all occasions, our hero concluded that he had misconstrued her intentions, and without further hesitation or apology, acceded to her request.

"And may I inquire the nature of this important service?" he said, as the carriage rolled rapidly towards St. James's.

The question was asked in a comparatively cheerful tone, but his companion was not to be deceived.

"I fear I have lost your confidence!" she replied. "There was a time, Clement, when you used to confide to me all your boyish griefs—your distaste for the profession to which your father wished to devote you—your fear of giving him pain by resisting his desire—the struggles between duty and inclination; but now you have a sorrow which you brood over in silence! Am I not right?"

The eagerness with which he attempted to argue away her suspicions only confirmed them. She listened to him patiently, and when he concluded, merely remarked that he had already wasted a quarter of an hour.

"You do not believe me, then?" he replied.

"If you say that I am wrong, Clem, yes! I at once discard the doubts which have tormented me—for my confidence in your word is as unbounded as my faith in your honor! But up to the present moment you have not replied to my question—you have merely evaded it! You forget," she added, "that I have a right to speak—the right of gratitude! Think you I have forgotten your kindness to the poor friendless creature who, half-mad with her wrongs and sorrows, fled to your father for advice and assistance, or the act of courage by which you so lately preserved her life! Speak to me freely, then, as you would to a dear friend—an elder sister, or a mother! If unhappy, at least let me offer you the consolation of sympathy!"

She longed to add, "assistance," but dreaded lest the word should wound the proud susceptibilities of the young soldier.

Clement Foster was touched; he felt that the sympathy of a warm, true heart, whose motives could not be misconstrued at such a moment, would be invaluable. Still a false delicacy and shame restrained him.

"Still silent!" said Martha, reproachfully.

"What can I say, my dear Miss Mendez, to so much goodness and candor! Some errors are without cure!"

"*Crimes*, if you will!" observed his companion; "but not errors! There is not one but has its remedy! You assure me," she added, in a more cheerful tone, "that your confidence and regard for me are unchanged?"

"From the very depths of my heart!" replied the young man, warmly.

"You have met with some misfortune!" resumed Martha; "perhaps pecuniary difficulties! You must not be angry at my frankness! If so, this concealment is most unwise—more—it is unkind, Clement! You know that I have wealth, which is a burthen to me—wealth, a portion of which, were I to die to-morrow, would be yours! Tell me all!" she added. "Afford me the gratification of being useful to you whilst I live! It is a false pride that would only accept a gift when the hand that bestowed it is cold within the grave!"

"Long—long may it be before your hand and heart are cold!" exclaimed our hero, warmly. "Had the annoyance, the misery I endure proceeded from any other cause than a pecuniary one, I should at once have confided it to you; but I knew your generous nature—knew that it would prompt you to proffer—nay, urge assistance, which honor forbids me to accept!"

"Honor! It is a serious word!" observed Miss Mendez, gravely.

"Judge before you condemn me!" replied Clement. "I have broken my word, pledged to my kind old father, and lost a thousand pounds at play! It is no palliation of my error—or rather crime, for it deserves the name—that I was led into it by the desire of restoring indirectly to Walter Trevanian a bet which I had won from him! He promised me to wait till I should be of age for the payment! He has broken faith with me—urged by his own necessities, I believe! The acknowledgement I gave him is in the hands of some money lender, and to-morrow it will be presented to my father!"

"That must not be!" observed his companion; "why inflict unnecessary wounds! Let me redeem it—it shall be a debt! You shall pay me interest for the money—usurer's interest, if you will!" she added; "and I promise to exact it to the last penny! Only let me have the satisfaction of sparing your father this sorrow! I can understand your delicacy," she continued; "appreciate, and admire it—though somewhat overstrained! You hesitate to receive assistance of a pecuniary nature from a woman, even though she happens to be old enough to be your mother!"

"And am I not right?" demanded the young man.

"In this instance, no!" replied Martha; "had you any other friend, the case might be different! What is the name of the man who holds these obligations?"

Clement remained silent.

"Do you doubt me?" she added. "Come—I promise not to redeem them without your permission—you know you may rely upon my word!"

"As upon an angel's! His name is Stork!"

"A tall, aged man," hastily exclaimed Miss Mendez, "with hypocrite stamped upon his face? A fellow who has a text for every extortion, and I fear for every villany!"

"The same!" replied our hero; "had he sat for his portrait, it could not have been more faithfully drawn! Though how you came to know him ——"

"Do not question me on that point!" interrupted his companion, hurriedly. Clement, I will not leave you in the hands of such a man! he is capable of urging you to ——, I scarcely know what I am saying!" she added, after a pause: "but I must see him!"

"And your promise?"

"Shall be kept to the spirit, as well as the very letter! Give me his address—I possess an influence over him which he will not resist! Without counting down a single coin—without bond or security—I pledge myself that he shall wait as humbly as a miser's expectant heir for the payment of his claims!"

"And silently!"

"And silently!" added Martha; "he will not dare to speak, if I but raise my finger to forbid him!"

Clement Foster was perfectly aware of the evil reputation which the grandfather of the speaker had borne—of the terrible hold she had possessed on the fears of the housebreaker, Miles—and doubted not that circumstances had given her a similar power over the respectable Mr. Stork. He accepted her offer with the warmest gratitude.

"You are my guardian angel!" he exclaimed; "you have relieved my heart of the load of anguish which oppressed it! My poor father! It would have been a terrible blow to him to know that I had deceived him!"

"You had better not see him," observed the lady, "till this affair is settled! You have a zealous advocate," she added, "and one, moreover, who will act without fee!"

'You will earn the best," he replied; "the approbation of your own excellent heart! What a helpless, unlucky creature I am!" he added; "poor, even in the beggar's coin—thanks! Why can I not show my gratitude? Why has fortune left you nothing to desire—to achieve?"

"Nothing?" repeated Martha, reproachfully.

"Forgive me—pray forgive me? I forgot the loss of your child!"

"It is seldom absent from my thoughts!" answered the lady, mournfully; "were it not for this war, which renders travelling impossible for an unprotected woman, I would seek her through every country in Europe! I often see her in my dreams," she added; "press her to my heart—hear her lips pronounce the name of mother! Oh, when will they be realized?"

"Probably," observed our hero, "at an hour when you least expect it! I should almost doubt the justice of heaven, had not Time that recompense in store for you—Time is at once the sword and balm! If it tries us with affliction, it seldom fails to heal the wounds it makes!"

Instead of returning to the house of his father, the speaker accompanied his companion to her mansion, where he wrote a note to the money-lender, desiring him to call upon him at ten the following morning, to arrange the affair between them.

The missive was dated from Harley Street, and worded purposely in an ambiguous manner, in order to induce the tempter to believe that the writer had yielded to his insidious offers, and accomplished the crime he had proposed.

He started an hour afterwards to rejoin his regiment at Windsor. Soon after his arrival, he was visited by Walter Trevanian.

"Foster!" he exclaimed, with an air of well affected contrition, "I cannot rest till I have unburthened my heart to you! I have acted vilely towards you—broken faith with you! I shall never forgive myself, even if you are generous enough to pardon me! I was half mad when I parted with that paper! But did you know how the old blood-sucker pressed me when he found it was in my possession—threatened and cajoled—how completely I am in his hands—you would pity me!"

"I do pity you!" replied the young man, coldly.

"I will see my father, confess everything to him—this fatal error shall be redeemed!"

"It is redeemed!" said Clement, in the same unimpassioned tone.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Walter Trevanian repressed a smile of triumph and satisfaction at the word.

"Great heavens! how did you procure the money?" he demanded.

"I cannot enter into details!" answered his victim; "enough that the affair is settled—and from this moment never let it be alluded to between us!"

"He takes it devilish coolly!" thought the hypocrite, who construed the indirect reply of our hero into a confirmation of the

success of his and Sir Richard's scheme of villany. For many reasons he did not wish to quarrel with his late dupe; first, because it might lead to an exposure of a transaction which every honorable man must reprobate, and, secondly, he had not forgotten the extraordinary skill which the young officer had displayed with the pistol in the riding-school, the morning after he had joined the regiment.

"Let us continue friends!" he said.

"Impossible!" replied Clement Foster; "friendship implies respect, communion of thought and feeling, confidence and truth! All are broken! Honor is the soul of friendship—the spirit fled, bury the worthless carcass in oblivion!"

His visitor secretly wondered whether he alluded to his—the speaker's—honor or his own.

"At least let us not part as enemies!"

"I feel neither friendship nor enmity!" observed the young man; "indifference—I am unwilling to use a harsher word—has replaced them both: and with this understanding, Lieutenant Trevanian, let us part! You have destroyed one of the illusions of life; the lesson has been painful, but I trust not useless! When we meet, we meet as men whose paths are different. It will be your own seeking," he added, "if ever I am forced to explain the cause of our estrangement!"

With this understanding they separated, and, from that time forth, when they met on parade, or in the mess-room, saluted each other as coldly as though friendship or intimacy had never existed between them.

Mr. Stork, the money-lender, was punctual to the appointment which our hero had made; he came with a full expectation of receiving the packet which he was so anxious to obtain. Great, therefore, was his surprise, when, on being shown into an elegantly-furnished library, Miss Mendez rose to receive him. She pointed to a chair on the opposite of the table at which herself was seated.

"You are Mr. Stork, the money-lender?" she observed.

"My name is Stork!" replied her visitor; "but I am no money-lender! I am merely the agent of another in this affair!"

"*Which affair?*" demanded Martha, who, with her natural shrewdness, felt assured that Walter Trevanian had parted with the I O U from some motive more urgent than his necessities.

The old man colored deeply. Despite his long habit of self-possession, the question disconcerted him. He imagined that Clement Foster, contrary to his promise, had disclosed all that had passed between them.

"I must see Mr. Clement Foster!" said the money-lender, after a few moments reflection.

"Impossible! he is with his regiment!"

Mr. Stork rose from his chair with the air of a man thoroughly convinced that he had been very much ill-used, drew on his rusty black gloves with great deliberation, and took his napless but well-brushed hat, to depart.

"Where are you going?" demanded Martha.

"To his father's!"

"You will do nothing of the kind!"

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "Who shall prevent me?"

"I tell you," said the speaker, "that you shall do nothing of the kind—nay, more—that you must keep the security you hold till Mr. Foster arrives at his majority, when it shall be honorably paid!"

"*Shall* and *must!*" repeated her visitor: "brave words—very brave ones! I should like to see the person who can compel me to wait for my money till the young spendthrift comes of age?"

"I can!" was the reply.

"You?"

"Nay, more—force you with a gesture to consign the paper—which I believe you obtained by fraud, for some dishonorable purpose—to the flames, here in my presence!"

"Mad!" thought Mr. Stork; "she must be mad!" Then, with an ironical bow, he asked aloud to be favored with her name.

"*Martha Quin!*" replied the lady in a stern tone.

The well-brushed hat fell from his hand upon the carpet, as if the holder had been suddenly stricken with the palsy, and he sank back into the chair he had so lately risen from.

"You!" he faltered; "you Martha Quin?"

"Do you doubt it? Shall I give you proofs that such is my name?" demanded the woman; "I can place my hand upon them in an instant—your letters to my grandfather, the partner of your crimes and schemes—your instructions to the man you called Captain! Shall I name the victim whose bones still rest in the unholy grave to which you, Miles, and your confederate murderer consigned them? Produce the watch, plundered from his person? I know everything," she added; "save the name of your employer!"

During the delivery of these terrible words, which fell with the distinctness of a death-knell—for they were slowly and solemnly uttered—upon the ear of the guilty man, cold drops of perspiration started on

his forehead and gradually trickled down his cheeks, suddenly he started to his feet. Martha placed her hand upon the bell; fortunately she had sufficient foresight to arrange that the table should be placed between them.

"My servants are ready in the hall!" she said; "a step nearer, and I summon them: it will then be beyond even my forbearance to spare you!"

"You cannot suppose," faltered the money-lender, "that I could be capable of violence!"

Martha smiled disdainfully, and pointed to the chair he had quitted. Slowly, and with the air of a tiger which had been baulked in its spring, he resumed his seat. For several moments they remained with their eyes fixed—each measuring the other's strength.

"You dare not betray me?" observed the respectable Mr. Stork, at last.

"And why not?"

"It would cover your name with infamy, as well as mine! The finger of scorn would be pointed at you! It would isolate you from the world—and all women love society!"

"I avoid it," observed the grand-daughter of Peter Quin, "that I may not feel its injustice when it falls upon me! I am alone in the world, with scarcely one tie to tell me that I am human! This young man has served me—saved my life—and strange as the avowal must seem to you, my heart is grateful!"

Still the money-lender appeared to hesitate.

"I risk but the shame, which I shall scarcely feel!" added the speaker; "you the scaffold!"

These last few words decided him.

"What is it you exact?" he demanded. "I have told you that I am but the agent of another in this business! I have no money to lend! I am poor—miserably poor! My means scarcely provide for the scanty wants of ——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the woman; "I am not to be turned from my determination by the plea of poverty, which I know to be false! Poverty!" she repeated; "when I know that your ill-gotten wealth might ransom your forfeit life, if gold could cancel crime! That paper must be left with me till Clement Foster reaches the age of twenty-one!"

With a groan of rage and disappointment, Mr. Stork assented.

"Should the transaction reach his father's ears, I shall hold you responsible!" she added. "No excuse, no trick, no shuffling *lie will save you! You* will find me as *deaf to your entreaties* as your callous nature has ever been to the voice of truth and justice!"

"But my money!" exclaimed the avaricious wretch; "my hard-earned money! A thousand pounds—all that I possess! Better die than be reduced to beg!"

"I will pay you the interest yearly," observed the lady; "and but for my promise given to Clement—whose honorable spirit recoils from pecuniary obligation—a woman's hand would discharge the debt at once!"

"And the letters?" whispered the old man. "The proofs?"

"Shall be destroyed at the same time with the papers you hold!"

With this arrangement the disappointed money-lender was obliged to be content. The I O U and the correspondence between himself and the late *respected* Peter Quin were sealed, and both parties proceeded at once to the banker of Miss Mendez; the packet was deposited with him, and a memorandum made that it was only to be given up upon their joint demand. Martha, with prudent foresight, added a condition, that, in the event of her death, it should be delivered to her companion and Clement Foster.

The same day the mind of our hero was set at rest by a note from Martha, in which she assured him that Mr. Stork had agreed to wait, and that the transaction would be kept a secret from his father.

When Sir Richard Trevanian waited upon the usurer, who had acted in the affair on his instructions, he was dreadfully disappointed on being told by his agent that the I O U was paid. It was the will he required—and not the money.

"Paid!" he repeated; "by whom?"

"I cannot tell!" replied the old man; "probably some friend of the young gentleman! Shall I write you a cheque, Sir Richard, for the amount?"

"No!" exclaimed the baronet—for though he had descended to crime, his spirit revolted at the meanness of receiving money which he knew had been obtained by cheating at cards and false dice. "Keep it," he added, "as the price of your services and discretion!"

The countenance of Mr. Stork, which had hitherto been sombre enough, at these words suddenly became radiant with smiles—since under any circumstances, he was not only insured against loss, but cleared a thousand pounds by the transaction.

"Sir Richard," he said, as he closed his cheque-book, with an air of intense satisfaction, "I have a caution to give you! The friends of Clement Foster suspect that the money was unfairly won! In fact, it was hinted that they had proofs—which they suppressed only on condition that the

affair did not reach the ears of the young gentleman's father!"

"I understand!"

"It was even hinted that you ——"

"They dared not!" exclaimed his visitor, impatiently: "my reputation is unstained! You are lying, Stork—for some secret purpose of your own—or have been prating——"

"As you please!" answered the old man, meekly—for he felt no inclination to quarrel with a customer who had acted so liberally; "*remember, I have warned you!*"

Sir Richard Trevanian left the house of the worthless agent he had employed more resolved than ever to obtain possession of his son Edward's will. Few men ever concealed more determination of character under a courtly, polished exterior, than the ex-diplomat. In his career he had recoiled at few crimes—though most of them had been so cleverly perpetrated, that human justice was baffled. The instruments he had employed seldom knew the hand which paid them—his path was in darkness and mystery.

In his resolution to obtain the will deposited in the chambers of Mr. Foster, he was not alone: the money-lender had come to the same determination.

Three days after the interview in which the baronet had learned the disappointment of his villanous scheme, he received a letter the contents of which puzzled him exceedingly. It ran thus:

"If Sir Richard Trevanian wishes to obtain the packet deposited by his eldest son in the office of a certain lawyer in the Temple, and is willing to pay handsomely for the possession of it, let him meet the writer on the third night from the date of this, at the hour of twelve, in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey. If Sir Richard fears assassination, let him come well armed. If he suspects robbery to be intended, he can leave his purse at home. This invitation will not be repeated."

The letter was signed—"From an unknown Friend."

"Friend, indeed!" exclaimed the guilty man; "if he but keep his promise! But should it prove a snare—a plan to compromise my reputation—to force me to show my character in its true colors!"

The doubt was a serious one. Still, after much deliberation he determined to risk it; so strong was his desire to possess himself of the second will—the first had been destroyed on the appointment of the Rev. Onias Amberwell to the rectory of Farnsfield—that he would have consented to meet the fiend himself; for, like most of his race, he was the slave of his passions. The cold, polished exterior which had so long and so successfully imposed upon the world, being a mere mask. Like the eternal snow upon the crest of Mount Etna, it gave no indication of the fires which raged within.

He resolved to carry out the suggestions of the writer to the very letter—to go well armed and without anything of value upon his person; so that if plunder were really intended, his unknown correspondent would be disappointed. In the doubts and hesitations which disturbed him, bitterly did the baronet regret the death of Peter Quin. Had he been living, he might safely have intrusted the management of the affair to his discretion; for in all the dark transactions he had employed him in—and they were more numerous than our readers as yet have had reason to suppose—he had never known the old man to fail.

In his pride and avarice, he had sworn to obtain possession of the three wills, and to shrink from no sacrifice of principle or feeling to accomplish his dishonorable purpose. His favorite son should not be a titled beggar, if his father could prevent it. Some fathers toil to bequeath to their children the inheritance of an unsullied name: Sir Richard Trevanian's ambition was to leave his offspring rich.

On the evening which the anonymous writer had fixed for the interview to take place, the baronet gave a large dinner-party which did not break up till within an hour of the appointed time. Shortly afterwards he quitted his mansion in St. James's Square, enveloped in a horseman's cloak, and, passing through Palace Yard, entered the Park—his nearest way to the place of rendezvous.

As the writer of the letter had suggested he was well armed.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Ages their influence o'er me shed;
Around me lay the mighty dead.
BY THE AUTHOR.

THE moon—night's mistress, as Spencer quaintly terms her—was pouring a flood of light over the glorious old pile of Westminster Abbey. It streamed through the broken arches of the cloisters which inclose the burial-ground, rendering the monuments on the opposite walls distinctly visible in a silvery, delicate relief. So clear was the night, that even the escutcheons chiselled in the granite pavement might be traced, unless where they had been trodden out by the feet of age.

Sir Richard Trevanian was the first at the appointed place of rendezvous. Despite his habitual self-command and insensibility to external impressions, he felt a sense of awe steal over him as he entered the precincts of the sacred edifice in which reposed the ashes of more than one of his ancestors, who had merited the honor of such a resting-place by services rendered to their country.

The baronet was naturally a proud man. He felt, and keenly too, the degradation of the crimes which, step by step, he had been led to commit—but not their sinfulness. Like many others of his class, it was the scorn of the world, in the event of their being discovered, that he feared, and not the reprobation of heaven. To have insured himself against the first, he would willingly have braved the second.

Bitter were his reflections as he paced with measured strides the quandrangle of the cloisters. The past—the irrevocable past—pressed with terrible vividness before him. The wife whom he had wedded for her wealth—whose heart he had broken by his polished coldness and neglect; the son whom he had abandoned to a brutal hireling's mercy. Next flitted athwart his mental vision an accusing form whose stern, pale features and stony glance half froze the blood within his veins. Once or twice he pressed his hands upon his eyes, as if to exclude the painful vision.

"It haunts me everywhere!" he murmured. "Sleeping or waking, he is ever present! This is madness! I must rouse myself, or such thoughts and dreams will turn my brain!"

As he spoke thus, the clock of the abbey struck the hour of twelve.

As the speaker completed his third tour of the cloisters, he saw the figure of a man seated in one of the arches, directly opposite the tomb of Abbot Islip: the stranger had placed himself in such a position that his person was completely in the shade formed by the adjoining buttress; in addition to which, he had taken the precaution to tie a large white handkerchief over the lower part of his features; a slouched hat—not unlike the modern wide-awake—was drawn over his brows, beneath which a pair of small, ferret-like eyes peered and sparkled like those of a wild cat in the dark. A long black coat, worn down to the feet, completed his costume.

Not doubting that this was the person who had appointed to meet him, Sir Richard Trevanian advanced at once to the spot. The man neither moved nor uttered a word, but remained with his glance still fixed upon *him*.

"You see I have attended to your summons!" said the baronet.

"Are you alone?" demanded the stranger.

"Alone, *but armed!*" was the reply.

"I expected the precaution!" observed the stranger; "although it is an unnecessary one—for I am without a weapon of any kind! Remove your hat!"

Sir Richard hesitated.

"That I may recognise you!" added the unknown.

The gentleman silently complied with his request, and threw his hat upon the stone buttress on which the speaker was seated. The moonlight fell upon his pale features, which were rigid as those of a statue.

"Are you satisfied?" he demanded, haughtily.

"Perfectly!" replied the man; "you are Sir Richard Trevanian! Now, then, to business! Your son—I mean your first-born—executed some deed or settlement—nay, it might be a will, for aught I know—a few hours before he died, and placed it in the hands of one Foster, a lawyer residing in the Temple, with instructions that it should not be opened till your death!"

"True!"

"You wish to obtain possession of that deed or paper?"

"Most earnestly!"

"What will you give for it!"

"Name your price!" exclaimed the baronet, impatiently; "I am not used to huckster with those who serve me!"

"Spoken like a true gentleman!" observed the man; "nothing like having to deal with the real quality! Well, then, on two conditions it is yours! First ——"

"Name them!" eagerly interrupted Sir Richard.

"I am about to do so," resumed the man, "if your impatience will let me! First, then, I must have a thousand pounds if I place the deed in your hands with the seals unbroken!"

"Agreed!"

"Secondly, you must let me have the I O U for a similar sum, which Clement Foster gave your son, Lieutenant Trevanian!"

"Impossible!"

"If that is your answer," said the stranger, coolly, and at the same time rising from his seat; "good night—our conference is at an end!"

"I tell you," repeated the baronet, "that it is impossible: the money has been paid and the I O U given up!"

"Paid! impossible! Where should he get the money!"

"Some friend paid it for him—a woman—at least I believe so!" urged the gentleman. "Think you I would hesitate for an instant,

were it in my power to comply with your demand? I repeat, it has been paid!"

His mysterious correspondent appeared to reflect for a few minutes.

"Well, Sir Richard," he observed, at last, "I don't wish to be hard with you: make it fifteen hundred pounds, and the deed shall be yours! But I had rather—much rather—have had the I O U!"

"And supposing that I agree to your terms," said the guilty man, "when shall the deed be mine?"

"Meet me to-morrow, at the same hour, in this place," replied the stranger; "bring the money in notes of a hundred each, and I will place it in your hands!"

"Then, exorbitant though they are, I do agree to them!" exclaimed Sir Richard, in a determined tone, "but as you have made your conditions, I must state mine!"

"That is only fair!"

"It is that, before parting with my money, you permit me to break the seal, in order to ascertain that it is *really the deed* executed by my late son!"

This precaution doubtless appeared extremely natural to the gentleman in the slouched hat and white cravat—for he at once assented to it; and after a few words more had passed between them they separated, with the understanding that they were to meet again at the time appointed. The baronet quitted the cloisters first, leaving his unknown companion in the obscure nook where he had remained seated during the entire interview.

"Well!" muttered the latter personage, as soon as the preceding footsteps of Sir Richard assured him that there was no danger of being overheard: "I have not made a bad night's work of it! I might have drudged and toiled for years before I had scraped together fifteen hundred pounds—and now, by a stroke of wit, I have realised it in one night! It is not the honest fool," he added, "who plods and works for years, that becomes rich, but the man who knows how to seize occasion! The vices of our fellow-creatures are a surer means to him who knows how to speculate in them properly! Fifteen hundred pounds!" he repeated, with a loud chuckle of satisfaction; "it is a good round sum—but I had rather have taken a thousand and Clem's I O U: I could have used that to as much advantage as the money!"

At the conclusion of these reflections, he rose from his seat, and, drawing his hat still closer over his brows, retired slowly from the place of rendezvous. As he emerged from the precincts of the abbey, he peered carefully around him, to ascertain that no curious eyes were near to watch his egress, or note the *road he took*—for he was considered a very respectable man by those who only knew his ostensible calling.

On the morning which followed the interview we have just described, Martha received a note from Mr. Stork, in which that gentleman solicited in the most abject manner the favor of an interview for a few moments. A faint smile rested for an instant on her features as she perused it.

"The gentleman is below!" observed the servant who had brought the letter into the drawing-room, where Clement Foster and Miss Wyndham were both seated.

"Do not leave the house till my return!" said the lady, addressing our hero; "I may require your services!"

Such a request was tantamount to a command to the grateful fellow whom she had so essentially served. He promised—and this time she felt she might rely upon him.

On entering the library, Miss Mendez was surprised at the alteration which a few days had made in the appearance of the money-lender: the smooth, self-satisfied, sanctimonious air of the man, had disappeared—his features were haggard, care-worn, and his eyes looked red, as though sleep had lately been a stranger to him.

The instant he beheld the grand-daughter of Peter Quin, he clasped his hands imploringly.

"I cannot rest," he said, "until those letters and the I O U are destroyed! I feel like a man seated on the crest of a volcano! If I close my eyes but for an instant I am haunted with fearful dreams, in which I see the hangman—feel his hands clutching at my throat—then I start and wake with cold perspiration on every limb and a throbbing at my heart! I did not know that I had one," he added, "till I saw you—it was so many years since it beat!"

"May these terrors which pursue you lead you to repentance!" replied Martha, gravely; "there is mercy to be obtained for all who ask it—if not here—at least hereafter!"

"But I can't repent till I am in safety!" exclaimed the terror-stricken wretch; "let us destroy the papers! I do not ask for the money—I am content to lose it—lose it all—though it would beggar me! It is safety, peace of mind, and dreamless nights that I require! Not a knock comes to my door but I start and tremble like a child! Formerly I used to smile—for I knew that it was some spendthrift who wanted gold—gold, to be paid back with triple interest!"

Martha turned from him with a sensation of mingled pity and disgust—for in his abject fears she failed to detect the least sign of that contrition which alone can heal the moral ulcers of the soul.

"And you are content," she said, "to

destroy *all the papers*, trusting to the honor of Mr. Clement Foster for the payment of the money when he comes of age?"

"I ask no better!" eagerly answered the guilty wretch.

"Be it so!" exclaimed the woman, who had not vainly boasted of her power over him; "I will accompany you to the banker's to demand the papers!"

The momentary glance of hate and satisfaction which shot from the small grey eyes of Mr. Stork did not escape the speaker, and she began to reflect how far it might be prudent to trust herself, even in her carriage, alone with one who had shown himself capable of every crime—especially with the proofs on which his life depended in her possession.

She rang the bell. The old man looked at her anxiously.

"Tell Mr. Clement Foster I desire to see him!" said Martha, to the footman who answered it; "and order the carriage instantly!"

"Mr. Clement Foster!" repeated the the money-lender, as the domestic quitted the room to execute the order he had received.

"Yes—he must accompany us!"

Her visitor uttered a half-suppressed groan of rage and disappointment. If he had formed any intention of possessing himself by violence of the proofs of his crimes and the I O U as soon as he should be alone with her in the carriage, from that instant he abandoned it. He felt that he was defeated at every point.

"Curse her!" he mentally exclaimed; "my time may one day come!"

When our hero entered the room, in obedience to the summons he had received, he started back as at the sight of some noisome reptile the instant he recognised the remarkable person of Mr. Stork, who replied by a look of profound humility to the glance of loathing and scorn which the young man cast upon him.

"I trust, my dear Miss Mendez," he said, "you have not submitted to the degradation of an interview with this wretch on my account?"

"On your account, certainly!" replied the lady; "but the interview has been granted at his humble—nay, almost abject entreaty! He is willing that the I O U, which is deposited at my banker's, should be destroyed!"

"On your payment of his demand? Never, Miss Mendez—never! I should despise myself—you would despise me—were I capable of abusing your friendship by accepting your generous offer! I know *the consequence of my folly*, and would a *thousand times rather* pay the penalty!"

"Your father!" whispered Martha.

"Will accept the atonement I propose to offer!"

"Atonement?"

"I will see him—confess everything!" continued the young man, "and offer to quit the service, as an atonement for my folly, and devote myself to the law! He will accept the sacrifice, which is indeed a painful one!" he added, with a sigh; "for my regiment is under orders to embark for the Peninsula, and my motives for selling out will be severely criticised!"

"Noble, generous boy!" exclaimed Miss Mendez, in an under-tone; "this trial is unnecessary, since Mr. Stork not only agrees to destroy the I O U, but wait, with no other security than your word, for his money, till you are of age!"

Clement Foster regarded her doubtfully.

"Have I ever deceived you?" continued the speaker.

"Never!

"Remember what I stated—that without paying down a coin of any kind—without giving bond, note, or promise—I would relieve you from the clutches of this harpy! I have done so! Be content, and do not ask the means!"

After so explicit a declaration, there was nothing more to be urged. In a few minutes the carriage was at the door, and all three drove to the banker's, where the packet, on the joint receipt of Martha and Mr. Stork, was given into the hands of the young soldier, who felt exceedingly puzzled to account for the anxious looks with which the money-lender watched his every movement. On their return to Harley Street he was the first to quit the carriage, and stood trembling at the door till his companions had passed before him into the library.

"Curse the fellow!" thought Clement; "does he imagine I want to steal it?"

As soon as all three were seated, Martha broke the seals, and removed from the envelope the I O U, which she handed to our hero, and pointed to the fire, still retaining the rest of the papers.

Our hero received it joyously.

"Is it," he said, "with your free consent that I destroy it?"

This was addressed to the usurer, who sat with his eyes riveted upon the packet, which Miss Mendez continued to hold in her hand.

"Yes—it is with my free consent!" replied the old man, with an effort which cost him a deeper pang than any words he had ever uttered.

The next minute the I O U was reduced to ashes.

"The letters!" screamed Mr. Stork, at the same time stretching forth his long,

bony fingers to clutch them; "your word! The letters!"

"Take them!" said Martha, calmly.

One by one the guilty wretch perused the proofs of his former crimes. As he finished each letter, he committed it to the flames, carefully thrusting it into the very centre of the fire, till every vestige was consumed.

When perfectly satisfied that every proof of his crimes was destroyed, the countenance of Mr. Stork assumed a very different expression. Every trace of humility disappeared from his features. He was no longer the cringing, humble, anxious person, speaking in a subdued tone of voice. The worm had become a viper, who felt its power to sting.

With great deliberation, he buttoned his threadbare coat to his chin, drew on his rusty old gloves, and pressed his hat with an air of defiance over his beetling brows.

"Good day, Martha Quin!" he exclaimed, with half-suppressed bitterness. "Good day, Mr. Clement Foster! You have had your turn—but mine may come soon! I am one of those who never forget either friends or foes, but regulate my accounts with them as I regulate my ledger!"

"Friends!" repeated the young soldier, with a smile of contempt; "is it possible this satire on human nature ever had a friend?"

"I had!" replied the old man, bitterly; "ask that woman—her grandfather! We were staunch friends and partners at one time! Were we not, Martha?"

"True," said Miss Mendez, calmly; "one has already escaped justice, and gone to answer for his deeds at the tribunal where all must one day stand; the other still lives to outrage the patience of heaven by fresh crimes! The wretched man you name," she added, addressing the money-lender, "was not the only person who shared in your *confidence* and desperate villanies! You had another friend—*the Captain!*"

At the name of his former accomplice, Mr. Stork looked a little less fierce.

"*Whose letters* are in my possession! They were written on various occasions," continued the speaker, "to my wretched grandfather!"

The money-lender slowly removed his hat from his head. The idea probably struck him that he had gone too far, or, to use a common but expressive phrase—which doubtless is familiar to most of our readers—halooed before he was fairly out of the wood.

"Of course," he said, once more resuming his humble tone, "you will keep faith with me? I have fulfilled my share in the compact between us!"

"As long," replied Martha, sternly, "as you merit my forbearance, by observing the conditions! Not a word which may reach the ears of Clement Foster's father! As for my own safety," she added, "I know how to provide for that! My servants are faithful, and provided with arms!"

"Can you suppose, my dear Miss Quin, that——"

"Begone!" exclaimed the woman, "and mark me—in the lone hours of the night, when, tossing on a sleepless pillow, the fiend you have served shall tempt you to fresh mischief, pray for my safety—for your own depends upon it! My precautions are already taken! Even from the grave the blow aimed by this feeble hand would reach you!"

Mr. Stork quitted the room with an air as meek and subdued as the one he had worn on first entering it.

"My dear Miss Mendez," said our hero, "to what trouble, anxiety—nay to what danger—has not your friendship for me exposed you! Should this ruffian——"

"Speak of him no more!" replied Martha, interrupting him; "he is not worth one thought! He knows me, and the means I possess to punish him! Believe me that from henceforth my safety will be as precious to him as his own!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

War and the great in arms shall poets sing,
Havoc and tears, and spoils and triumphing,
The morning march that flashes in the sun,
The feast of vultures when the day is done,
And the strange tale of many slain for one.
ROGERS.

In 1811, in consequence of urgent demands made by Wellington for reinforcements for his gallant army, the government resolved to send a large body of troops, to enable the great commander to carry the war, which had been everywhere glorious to the British arms in Portugal, into Spain, where Massena had roused the fierce spirit of the people by his needless cruelties and wanton successes.

Amongst the regiments sent out to reinforce the army in the Peninsula was the one commanded by Colonel Barratt. No sooner were the orders to embark received, than much of the debauchery and laxity of discipline ceased as if by enchantment. The senior officers felt the responsibility of their position; the juniors burned, with true English ardor, to prove themselves worthy of the name they bore, the flag they had the honor to serve under, and the com-

rades they were about to join at the seat of war—comrades the recital of whose gallant deeds and countless victories had caused their young hearts to thrill with emotion and generous emulation.

At length the time came for the regiment which our hero had joined, to depart for the Peninsula. The division to which he belonged was under the command of General De Vere, an old friend of Mr. Foster's, and a man of the strictest probity and integrity, and to his care the old lawyer, Mr. Foster, cheerfully committed his son. We need not describe the parting between Clement and his parent—it was such as might be expected to take place between a good father and a son of unblemished filial piety. Clement was obliged to undergo a "scene" with Miss Wyndham; but she failed in her cherished plan of drawing him into a declaration. She could only obtain from him an avowal of his love for her—*as a brother!* She at once turned her attention solely to Walter Trevanian, to whom she wrote tender letters, which Clement afterwards saw. Martha took leave of young Foster with feelings of the deepest sorrow. He was the preserver of her life—the son of her benefactor, her adviser and best friend, and, without ties as she was, no wonder that his departure smote her heart sorely.

Sally Carrol, now Mrs. Barry, and the young painter, were present when Clement bade farewell to Martha. Barry had arrived to tell the latter that he had finished a copy of Fanny's portrait for her, from the original in the possession of Mrs. Watkins. Barry was radiant with happiness—Martha had promised to send him to Italy, where he could perfect himself in his art.

The parting of Walter Trevanian with Sir Richard was of a very singular character. It did not include sighs, love or regrets. Sir Richard had obtained the packet from his mysterious "friend" in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, and felt satisfied that but one other of his son Edward's wills remained to be destroyed. This, he informed Walter, was in the possession of an officer whose regiment was serving in Portugal, and who had been absent from England for nearly twelve years. The officer's name was Colonel Harrington.

"I shall not forget it," observed the young man, when he heard it, bitterly.

"The will he holds," said Sir Richard, "you must obtain yourself—he is beyond my reach. Your task will be the easier that he is ignorant of the dispositions of the will—Edward having directed that the seals *were to* be broken only at my decease. *The very precaution* the unnatural boy has *taken," he added,* with a smile, "will enable us to defeat his plans! Had the deeds been proved on his death, it would have rendered all our scheming useless! I can give you no instructions beyond advising you to obtain, if possible, the confidence of the Colonel. There are few men who have not their weak points, and where so vast an interest is at stake, means, which under ordinary circumstances would be considered reprehensible, become lawful!"

With this *carte blanche* for his moral conduct, his father dismissed him, perfectly assured that the seed had not been sown on an ungrateful soil.

Without further digression proceed we now to the seat of war—that war which crowned with fame the name of Wellington, and added fresh laurels to the British arms. From the seige of Badajoz to Salamanca, Valladolid, Astorga, Seville, to the great bartle of Vittoria, Clement Foster assisted in the struggle. He, with Lord Peapod, had been invariably chosen by Colonel Barratt, to perform every service of more than ordinary danger. But instead of insuring their destruction this only ministered to their success. It was a pity that they were not killed, for the colonel hated Clement for a fancied insult, and the death of Lord Peapod would elevate him (the colonel) to the peerage.

At Salamanca, where Lord Peapod was severely wounded, Clement, amid a shower of bullets, carried him to the rear of his regiment and thus saved his life. From that day it was positively dangerous for any one to speak disparagingly of our hero in his lordship's presence.

The army was on its way to Toulouse, where Marshal Soult intended to give it battle. Many of the officers of the last division, to which our hero was attached, were wounded, and had not been reported fit for active service—they were consequently allowed to follow their regiments at their leisure. Between Toulouse and Bordeaux, when near an old-fashioned substantial building known as the Chateau Vert, one of the officers was observed to reel in his saddle. He would have fallen from his horse had not Clement Foster, who was riding next him, supported him. He was too ill to proceed further, and was conveyed to the Chateau, where nobody was seen save a few armed domestics, an elderly lady of very peculiar appearance both in dress and person, and a beautiful young girl who was called Mademoiselle Louise. The suffering officer was kindly provided for—every attention was shown him—and it was apparent to everybody that he had but a short time to live. This officer was no other than Colonel Harrington. Judge of Walter Trevanian's delight

when he observed the poor man gradually and surely sinking into the arms of death! The packet would now be his—fortune seemed to favor him beyond his wishes! It also happened that he and Marshall, who was now his sworn friend and constant companion, were billeted at the Chateau, and were permitted, in consequence, constant and free access to the dying colonel's apartment. Marshall was a creature of Colonel Barratt's, and he had intimated to Walter that in case of Peapod's death *his own promotion* would be certain. Walter, without describing the exact nature of the packet in Harrington's possession, informed Marshall that it was one of the utmost importance to him, and that it must be secured at any cost or hazard. A tacit compact was immediately entered into by them—they were to favor each other's schemes to the utmost.

The conduct of Walter Trevanian and Marshall towards the mysterious elderly woman and her beautiful young companion was rude and ungentlemanly in the extreme. Mademoiselle Louise called the old lady "baroness"—this was the only inkling the officers could procnre as to her rank. It was insignificant, they thought, at best. So insufferable did their gross attentions to Louise become, that the baronsss wrote to Wellington himself to ask for their removal. Clement Foster bore her letters. On the seal of one was an imperial crown surmounted by a double headed eagle. She *was* somebody of importance; but who? Clement Foster and Lord Peapod were billeted at the Chateau instead of Walter and his companion. Louise and Clement fell in love with each other at first sight. Who could blame them? Louise informed our hero that she was not French, as he had supposed, but "English in heart as well as birth." Her residence in France was voluntary—she said; she had a duty to perform which made it so; beyond this she could tell her lover nothing. He had a faint recollection of having seen her face before—but when or *where* he could not think, but that it was not unfamiliar with him he was positive. The puzzle he resolved to trust to time to unravel.

Clement and Lord Peapod had gone out, leaving their servants, (Lord Peapod's was a scoundrel called Peter,) behind them, when it was said that Colonel Harrington had but a brief hour to exist! The Colonel's orderly was a soldier named Duncan, who had been in *Edward* Trevanian's service. Aware that his moments were few, the colonel called this faithful fellow to his side.

"Duncan, I was your first master's friend," he said, faintly.

"I know it, sir," said the sorrow-stricken soldier, "he wanted to see you badly on the night of his death."

"He *did* see me, and confided to my friendship and honor a sacred trust, which I am not permitted to fulfil. You must execute it for me. It is Edward's will—you will find it in the lining of my uniform."

Duncan secured it at once. By the time he had done so the colonel was no more. At this moment Walter Trevanian and Marshall made their appearance ostensibly to ask how Harrington was. The orderly pointed to the couch.

"Dead!" cried Walter; "poor fellow!"

"It would be but proper to seal up his papers," said Marshall, with an affected tone of sorrow.

No sooner said than done. The colonel's valise was fastened, sealed, and taken away by his fellow officers for *safe* keeping.

Duncan knew what Walter sought, and as soon as he was left alone he reflected a moment, then starting up as if a sudden idea had occurred to him, he said:—

"It is my only chance! Master," he added, apostrophising the body, "forgive your old soldier if he judges unwisely; he does it for the best!"

He immediately quitted the room and *sought the apartment of the ladies.*

Great was the chagrin—the rage—the terror—of Walter when he found that the packet was not in the valise. He returned with Marshall to the room in which Harrington lay dead and searched the corpse. The precious papers were not there; but the coat lining was ripped and the aristocratic villains instantly suspected Duncan, who just at that juncture of affairs made his re-appearance.

"You have robbed your master!" abruptly shouted Walter.

Duncan respectfully pleaded not guilty to the charge—he dared not show his indignation—they were *officers!*

"Villain," continued Walter, pointing to the rip in the uniform, "can you deny that is your work?"

"I deny nothing," replied Duncan, still preserving a tone of deference, although his blood boiled with anger.

The officers advanced with the intention of searching him.

"Back!" he cried, seizing his musket, which stood in one corner of the room, "the first who lays a hand upon me shall answer with his life, although I lose my own. You would force me to betray my trust to my dead master! Do not tempt me, Captain Trevanian, lest I forget the difference of our station and stretch you dead at my feet!"

There is no telling what might have occurred had not an aid-de-camp with an

escort of troops *sent by Wellington*, to protect the baroness and her lovely charge opportunely made his *entree*. Clement and Lord Peapod were with them.

Marshall coolly charged Duncan with robbing his master of valuables—most probably notes, as the lining of his uniform was cut, and stated that Captain Trevanian and himself had detected the poor soldier in the very act. Duncan was searched—*nothing was found upon him*. However, he had threatened his superior officer with a deadly weapon—this was an offence which military law punished with death, and he was accordingly marched away a prisoner.

As the party left the chateau, Mademoiselle Louise slipped a piece of paper into Clement's hands. On it was pencilled the following words :—

"Save the poor soldier, if possible—he is innocent!"

The battle of Toulouse at length was fought. Lord Peapod had fallen by a shot which came from his own troop, and Marshall had instantly killed the man who fired it—Peter, his lordship's rascally valet. Why Marshall was so prompt in avenging the act Clement was at a loss to understand. He suspected that the first crime had been concealed by a second. After the battle, which was dearly won by the British, Clement sought for Peapod's body. It was gone! One of the wounded, who knew Clement, said that a soldier who recognised his lordship, had carried it away, and this was all the information he could get concerning the matter. Duncan, he ascertained, had escaped on the eve of battle.

The night after the action, Clement started, with his servant George, for the Chateau Vert. They reached it to find it in flames. The fire, it was evident was the result of design, not accident. There had been treachery somewhere—that was evident. The ladies were nowhere to be found, and Clement, with his trusty follower, despairingly gave up the search, not, however, till they had discovered the remains of Colonel Harrington in a narrow dell in a wood near the ruined edifice. It was reverently covered with a cloak.

"Hope, sir, hope!" said George, "if the dead have been removed, surely the living have escaped."

"You are right, George!" remarked Clement, "I have still something to trust and live for!"

Shortly after the events we have described, an amnesty was concluded by Soult with Wellington, and the British army entered Paris. It had been there but a week when Clement received a pressing note to *visit the Swedish Embassy*. He lost no *time in answering the invitation* in person, and discovered that "the baroness," who received him, was Madame Krudner, the wife of the Swedish Ambassador, and the particular friend of the Emperor of Russia. Peapod was concealed there, too, very ill, but out of danger. Duncan had carried him from the battle field. Louise was there, and the lovers were once more happy in each other's presence.

The young girl confessed her love candidly, but she would not permit our hero to bind himself by any engagement.

"I have a task to perform," she said, "to which I am pledged by every feeling of gratitude and duty. That accomplished, if you think me worthy of your love, with joy I will consent to be yours."

He began to think he was the victim of mysteries.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Cunning is blinded by the thirst of gold
And avarice falls into the simple snare.
Which childhood might avoid. OLD PLAY.

NAPOLEON'S abdication and retirement to the island of Elba gave to Europe a temporary peace. The soldiers had all returned to England, and London was in the height of gaiety. The allied sovereigns had arrived on a visit to the Prince Regent—all was life, animation, and brilliancy! The opera season promised to be the greatest ever known. Mademoiselle Cherini was the star at the time. Her salary was enormous, and her caprices were numerous and boundless. She would frequently disappoint an audience by a non-appearance; but audience and directors were obliged to submit; *there was no one to replace her!* Signor Garrachi warned her that she would try the patience of the public once too often—she only smiled scornfully. He had squandered all his own money. He was, in fact, her slave. His jealousy was excited, too, by the attentions of a Russian baron named Stollehoff, who talked of *marriage*, although he was aid-de-camp to the Emperor. The idea of marriage with wealth and title intoxicated the brain of the not over young vocalist.

Among the returned regiments was that of Clement Foster, who had, by request, scrupulously concealed the fact of Lord Peapod's escape from the hand of his assassin. Both had their suspicions on the subject, but neither spoke them.

When Clement Foster presented himself, on his return to his father, that gentleman received him with freezing sternness,

and without a word of welcome. He soon explained his conduct by charging Clement with robbing him of the will entrusted to his care. Clement's recital of the facts connected with the Stork interview and the fate of the I O U, opened the old man's eyes, and Clement was once more restored to his love and confidence. He at once suspected Griffiths,—who had told him of the interview and confessed to overhearing it,—of being the thief. A plan was at once laid to entrap him. Clement's return was not yet known, and it was given out that he was lying ill in Paris and not expected to live. The following advertisement was inserted in the morning papers:—

"To L'Inconnu.—The nobleman who, several years since, was materially assisted in the recovery of certain family papers, wishes an interview with his unknown friend. A line through the same medium as the present communication will be promptly attended to."

This did not fail to attract the attention of Mr. Griffiths. The bait took well.

Mr. Foster made every preparation for going to Paris, and assumed all the tokens of grief for the expected loss of his son with consummate skill. Clement was hidden at the house of Miss Mendez, in Harley Street. Mr. Griffiths, after seeing Mr. Foster off, as he thought, for Dover, prepared and caused to be published, the annexed answer to the advertisement which had so deeply interested him.

"L'Inconnu.—The nobleman who advertised under the above name, may meet the party to whom he feels himself so deeply indebted, *at the same place and at the same hour* on this or any of the two following evenings."

The morning on which this was printed Mr. Foster carefully disguised his person, drove off from Harley Street in a coach, and remained absent the most of the day. During his absence Martha succeeded in drawing from Clement the information that he was in love. He related how he had met the object of his passion in France,—how he had discovered her mysteriously in Paris, and how he had again lost sight of her, and was extolling her beauty and descanting upon her numerous virtues, when his eye suddenly fell upon the portrait of Fanny, which Barry had copied for Miss Mendez.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed, "the very features! Idiot that I was to have forgotten them!"

"The hope of years will be fulfilled at last!" cried Martha, almost wild with excitement. "You have seen my child—you love her—you will be her husband! But where am I to seek her?" she inquired, abruptly.

The young soldier could not afford her a reply; but he pledged himself to devote his existence to the discovery. Martha's grief and excitement gradually subsided into calmness. It was arranged that the discovery of Fanny, and Clement's attachment to her, should be kept a secret from the lawyer till events should further declare themselves.

Mr. Foster returned at a late hour in the evening, and appeared full of hope and animation. He told his son to be ready to accompany him at a moment's notice, and emphatically said that "they should catch the villain in his own snare." About midnight a steady, respectable looking man called upon Mr. Foster, who after a whispered conversation, directed his son to change his shako for a hat, and throw a cloak over his military uniform.

When thus attired, all three left the house together.

About the same time the clever Mr. Griffiths, attired as he was when he met Sir Richard before in the cloisters, left his lodging and made his way to Westminster Abbey. Several times he thought he was followed; but the parties that excited these fears took no notice of him, and soon disappeared from his view.

"All right," he said, as he neared his destination. "I defy the police, and Satan himself to detect me now."

He little imagined that both parties had an eye upon his proceedings. He made his way cautiously to the spot where he had formerly seen the baronet, and seated himself upon a stone bench to await his arrival. In about a quarter of an hour a quick footstep approached.

"Is that you, Sir Richard?" he inquired, as the party drew near.

"Hush!"

"Oh! there is no danger of interruption," continued the clerk, "we are alone, and know each other."

"Perfectly!" replied a voice which made him start.

The next instant he was disarmed and handcuffed. His captors were Mr. Foster, Clement and a Bow Street officer. He declared that he was there to meet his *sweetheart*—denied the theft of the will, boldly accused our hero of purloining it, and, when brought before a magistrate next morning, related the offer he had heard Stork, the money-lender, make Clement respecting the package. The magistrate hesitated and granted a reluctant remand!—Clement was in despair! His only hope was in Martha. No sooner did she learn the condition of affairs than she at once went with Mr. Foster and his son, to Stork's house, to pre-

cure his evidence and bring the guilt home to the perpetrator. The receiver, Sir Richard, was beyond earthly punishment; he had died on the night before, and his son was now *Sir* Walter Trevanian. Strange to say, Stork was on his death-bed, too; but he made a long confession to Martha, Mr. Foster and a magistrate. Clement was completely vindicated, his father told him; but the confession was, otherwise, one he could have wished had not been made.

"You have heard me speak," said the lawyer, "of the son of General Maitland, who had disappeared so unaccountably! He was *murdered* by Stork and Miles, assisted by a man whom they knew only as *The Captain*, at the instigation of Peter Quin, the grandfather of Martha. He described the exact spot in which the murdered remains of George Maitland were concealed. I regret to say it is one of the houses in the Almonry, the property of Miss Mendez."

"The discovery cannot affect her," remarked the young man.

"Legally, no!" replied the old man, "morally, yes! The world is a harsh judge, and visits the sins of the father upon the children!"

Captain Foster began to reflect what might be the feelings of his parent when he should learn that he was attached to the great grand-daughter of a murderer. Somewhat disheartened, he quitted his father to go directly to the Clarendon Hotel, where Lord Peapod was living under the assumed name of Major Jones. He wished to punish his unnatural uncle, who had assumed his title, and was spending his fortune.

Clement found him in his room in good spirits, albeit he said he had been making his will, and had resolved never to marry. While they were conversing, the sound of many voices, merry laughter, and an unusual bustle, came up from below. Upon inquiring the cause, they were informed by a waiter who was in a tremendous hurry, that Lord Peapod was entertaining his friends with one of the finest spreads of the season. Just then there was a great cheer and a jingling of glasses.

"Ah!" said the suffering officer, bitterly, to our hero, "some jackall has drawn a comparison between the late and the present Lord Peapod."

"You are in error," said his friend, after listening for a few seconds, "it was the Regent's health they drank; your uncle's turn has not come yet."

"You're right!" remarked Peapod, after *a pause*, "I shall be in time!"

"*In time for what?*" demanded his friend.

"To return thanks when my health is drunk," answered the invalid, dryly.

It was in vain Clement remonstrated—his lordship was not to be turned from his purpose; but donning his full uniform proceeded with Clem. to the apartment where the revel was being celebrated. The door was opened and near it was a screen at the back of the President's chair. Behind this Peapod and Clem. concealed themselves. Everything went on swimmingly. At length Marshall arose, and after having spoken of their noble host in every complimentary term contained in the language, proposed "The health of Lord Peapod."

At that moment the real lord walked into the room, and coolly taking the glass of wine which his uncle held, said:—

"Very handsome, indeed, Marshall; more than I expected from you! When I require an epitaph, you shall write me one."

All was terror—dumb consternation! The junior officers tried to get up a cheer; but the surprise was too strong upon them to succeed.

"This is quite touching!" observed his lordship, sarcastically, "joy at my unexpected return has rendered you speechless."

Having said this he bowed coldly to the guests of his uncle—met, as it were, to celebrate his death—and, taking Clement's arm, quitted the room, leaving confusion, bitterness and disappointment, mingled with some sly satisfaction, where lately all had been hilarity. Such is the world!

CHAPTER L.

Were his eyes open? Yes, and his mouth, too.
Surprise has this effect—to make one dumb;
Yet leaves the gate which eloquence slips through
As wide as if a long speech was to come. BYRON.

LORD BEARMOUTH and the Prince Regent were at enmity, and the former, having been forbidden to attend the revels of the Court, determined to eclipse them by those at his own residence. On one of these occasions he paid Mademoiselle Cherini one thousand guineas to absent herself from the theatre, where she was announced to appear as the prima donna in the opera of *Didone Abbandonata*, and sing at his lordship's party. The Regent and his royal guests were to attend the performance—the house was crowded with the *elite* of the fashionable world—but no *Dido* was there. The manager was frantic, and thought of committing suicide. He had not made up his mind what to do, when a note was hand-

ed him. It had been left, he was told, by two ladies who were in their carriage at the stage door. He ordered them to be admitted instantly. The opera commenced without a word of apology, and when Dido made her appearance the public discovered a fair young English girl instead of Mademoiselle Cherini.

Suffice it to say that her *debut* was unusually successful—her triumph a perfect *furor!* The fair young unknown suddenly found herself one of the idols of the day, and yet the laudation showered upon her caused her pain, for she feared it would not be increased or approved by one being in the world, and that being was Clement Foster. At the end of the performance the novice and the aged lady who accompanied her sought the director's room, and an engagement was at once concluded. The *debutante* of the night was now *prima donna* of His Majesty's Theatre! Mademoiselle Cherini, who had heard how singularly her place had been supplied, and who had witnessed, unrecognized, the last act of the opera, at this juncture sailed into the director's room like a tragedy queen, followed humbly by Signor Garrachi. The eldest woman suddenly dropped her veil.

When Cherini heard she was no longer wanted—that her star had set—she upbraided the cool and complacent director violently.

"Entrust the destiny of an establishment like this to a novice—a mere child!" she exclaimed.

"She has been carefully trained."

"Trained!" cried Cherini, "in what school? Who ever heard of her? Who have been her instructors?"

"*I* have!" replied the elder of the two ladies, raising her veil, and discovering to the astonished Cherini, and the guilty husband, the features of Madame Garrachi.

"Do you remember me?" continued the outraged wife and broken-hearted mother. "I perceive you do! I read your recognition in the long-absent blush which has at last returned upon your cheek! Think you," she added in an ironical tone, "that my pupil has not been well tutored? Oh, I have been cold as contempt, patient as hate with her! I tell you that in my best days, when youth and enthusiasm lent their spell, and I was an idol with the public, neither my voice nor genius ever rivalled hers. Judge what chance *you* can have, at your years—the sensibilities and the emotions of the heart extinct, and nothing left of genius but its worn-out passions!"

The *debutante* was Fanny! Cherini was overwhelmed with shame. Her downfall was complete. Signor Garrachi attempted to speak, but was cut short by his wife, who promised, in words of scorn, to secure him a pittance to keep him from absolute want.

The signor retired to Normandy to live on his wife's charity, Mademoiselle Cherini having married her noble Russian admirer, had gone to his *estates* in Russia. She found that he was a clever adventurer without title, or possessions save a small farm and a cottage, and was compelled to submit to his tyrannies, he having obtained her jewels and her money. One day, when he thought he had sufficiently tamed her, he handed her a letter. It ran thus:—

"You relieved me of a worthless husband; to show my gratitude, I have provided you with a good, though stern one."

It was signed "Madame Garrachi." The next hour the body of the guilty woman was dragged from the river, into which in her despair and disappointment, she had cast herself.

Clement Foster and Walter Trevanian had witnessed the *debut;* but with totally different sensations. The former was mystified—shocked! Walter was delighted! The fair girl of the Chateau Vert was *only an actress!*—a certain assurance, to his vulgar mind, that her innocence was not impregnable.

Clement, with his feelings in a whirl, hastened to Martha to acquaint her with what had taken place. It is enough to say that the joy she felt at the tidings of Fanny's whereabouts—that she could see and speak with her—was paramount to all other emotions. She saw that Clement was distressed, and questioned him closely as to the cause of his evident sorrow. She feared his love for her child had cooled. Not so! His distress proceeded from the idea that the being he loved (and whose purity and constancy he would have pledged his life for,) was upon the stage—exposed to the gaze of sensualists—subject to the flattery and *temptation* of every titled libertine and his wealth. He knew, too, that his father's prejudices against the theatrical profession were deeply rooted, and he feared that nothing could eradicate them. Poor Fanny, her heart misgave her, too! She dreaded lest the honest manly love of our hero should subside before the prejudices inseparable from her position.

Martha determined to see her long-lost child, not as the wealthy heiress, but as the humble and poor grand-daughter of Peter Quin, in the dress which she wore when Fanny knew her. It was a curious freak; but she was not to be persuaded from it. Clement, too, resolved to see his heart's idol, and induce her, if possible, to renounce her present vocation.

Fanny's second appearance was a great-

er triumph than the first. At the termination of the opera she was surrounded in the green-room, by nobles and *dilletanti*, and in the crowd she saw Sir Walter Trevanian. He approached her with an air of respect—an air far different from that he had assumed towards her at the Chateau Vert; but she freezingly and politely refused to acknowledge his acquaintance. He mentally swore to be revenged! and left the room. In passing the stage door he heard a woman imploring to be admitted.

"Can't do it!" said the doorkeeper, "not even if you were her mother."

"*I am her mother!*" replied the woman, in a tone of great excitement. "She was stolen from me when a child, and I come to reclaim her."

"Better go to a magistrate," observed the doorkeeper, with a sneer.

Here was a triumph—a revenge, thought Sir Walter. He would lead this shabbily-attired, almost beggar-like looking woman to the green-room, and present her, in the presence of the brilliant circle that surrounded her, to Fanny.

"Follow me!" he said, "I will conduct you to your daughter. As for you, my man," he added, addressing the doorkeeper, "I will take the responsibility upon myself."

At the sound of his voice, the suppliant hastily let fall the old, rusty black veil which she wore.

Fanny was just about retiring from the green-room when Sir Walter and the female entered. At the sight of the female, who instantly raised her veil and fixed her dark eyes upon her, with an expression of mingled anxiety, love, hope and expectation, the countenance of the singer became troubled. She seemed endeavoring to recall some long-forgotten image.

"Who is this person!" she demanded.

"Permit me to present," said the baronet, with a sneer, "this very respectable person. She is——"

"My mother!" shrieked our heroine, "my own dear, lost, kind mother!"

In an instant they were closely locked in each other's embrace.

But one being present was not touched by this display of filial love—need we say that it was Sir Walter Trevanian?

"You are not ashamed to own me, then?" sobbed Martha—for it was her.

"Ashamed!" responded Fanny, with innocent surprise. "Ashamed because you are poor? That will make you the more dear to me!" Turning to the baronet she added, "deeply as you offended me, I *forgive you*! The happiness you have *procured me, has cancelled* even the memory *of your fault!*"

Sir Walter was about to take her extended hand, when Martha drew it hastily away, exclaiming, "His touch is pollution."

"Is the woman mad or drunk?" observed the disappointed ruffian.

"Protect us, gentlemen!" exclaimed our heroine, clinging closely to Martha.

"That is my duty," said Clement Foster, who had just obtained entrance with a friend—"who has dared to insult you? But I need not ask the question when I see that ruffian, Sir Walter Trevanian. This, however, is no time for an explanation; I guessed what had happened, Madame," he said, turning to Miss Mendez, "when I saw your carriage and servants at the stage-door!"

"Carriage! Servants!" exclaimed several.

"I recollect her now," observed the baronet, with a triumphant smile, "despite her masquerade: the woman is rich enough. *The virtuous Miss Mendez* is, it seems, the mother of our new *prima donna!*"

"Fanny," observed Martha, calmly, "you have heard what this man said—that you are the child of one who never was a wife."

"I shall not love my mother less," was our heroine's reply.

"These words have repaid me!" exclaimed the happy woman. "Look up, my child—look proudly in his face, and tell him that your birth is as unsullied as his own—nay, more so—for his father was a felon, whom, were he living, one word of mine could send to the scaffold. Sir Walter Trevanian," she added, "it is the granddaughter of Peter Quin who tells you so!"

At the name of Peter Quin, Sir Walter started, and left the room. *He had met with it among his father's papers.*

As a matter of course, Madame Garrachi's authority over her pupil ended. Her revenge was accomplished, and that was all she cared for.

Our heroine rested that night in Harley Street, under the roof of her adopted mother. Neither herself, Martha nor Clement *slept* much. The latter was up at day-break. He felt anxious for his father's introduction to Fanny. Her sweetness, her beauty, her virtue, he felt convinced, would vanquish any repugnance the old gentleman might entertain on the score of her birth, respecting which there still appeared some painful mystery.

Poor Clem! He judged with the sanguine hope, the blind confidence of a lover. His father was a man of the world, and if not the slave of, was at least influenced by its prejudices.

CHAPTER LI.

In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed.
In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;
In halls, in gay attire is seen,
In hamlets, sports upon the green.
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And man below, and saints above—
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.
WALTER SCOTT.

FANNY had not been many hours under the roof of her adopted parent before her candid, truth-loving nature revealed itself by confiding to Miss Mendez her only secret—the love she felt for Clement Foster. The avowal was accompanied by a confession of her fears lest her appearance on the stage should have shaken the affection and confidence of the young soldier.

Agonising as was the doubt, she would not have recalled the step, even had it been in her power to have done so. She had paid her debt of gratitude to Madame Garrachi, and found consolation in the recollection.

Martha listened to her with a mingled feeling of admiration and self-reproach. At the risk of her future happiness, the object of her care had nobly performed her duty—whilst she, on the contrary, had neglected hers; for, with the clue in her possession it had long been in her power to discover the real parents of our heroine—to restore her, probably, to a home of love and happiness—to dry the tears of those who mourned her.

The conviction that she had been selfish in her affection, whilst Fanny, on the contrary, had been noble and self-denying in hers, was a painful one. In vain she attempted to reconcile her conduct to her conscience by reflecting on the vast fortune which she intended to leave her. The experience of her own sad life whispered that wealth was but a poor substitute for those natural and endearing ties which make the heart so rich—a mother's smile—a father's tender care—a sister's or a brother's love: all of which, for aught she knew, her culpable silence had deprived her of.

"He loves you devotedly, tenderly!" she exclaimed, as she enfolded the blushing girl in her arms. "I have known Clement from his boyhood. His is not the nature to love lightly or to change—even," she added, mentally, "if his father should oppose his choice! There might be a struggle—but the heart would prove victorious!"

Fanny raised her soft blue eyes, and fixed them long and earnestly upon the speaker. If love in its impetuosity sometimes blinds, in its purity it strengthens the judgment of youth. She saw that Martha had not given utterance to all her thoughts.

"I am sure he will act rightly!" she said, with a half suppressed sigh; "and even when it is most painful to our self-love, the path of duty is the wisest as well as the best!"

Miss Mendez colored deeply—she felt the unintentional reproof.

"You are right!" she observed; "a duty neglected haunts us like a shadow, mingling even in our dreams; and the voice of reproof grows louder with years! You have given me a subject for reflection, Fanny!"

"You! Oh, no!" interrupted the grateful girl; "you can have no such reproach to make to yourself—you are all tenderness and goodness!"

"He who framed the heart alone can judge it!" replied Martha, more collectedly; "its greatest weaknesses ofttimes arise from the depth of its affections! But we will speak of this another time; heaven is more merciful to us than we are to ourselves, and leaves the gates of atonement open long after passion and selfishness would have closed them!"

With this observation the conversation was permitted to drop; but it had made a powerful impression on the naturally rightly judging mind of the speaker. The seed was sown, and only required time to ripen and bring forth fruit.

At a very early hour Madame Garrachi called, to announce her intended departure for France and to take her leave of her former pupil. They had not lived so many years isolated from the world, continually in each other's society, without contracting a mutual feeling of affection. It was painful to part, but the resolution of the once brilliant *artiste* was taken.

"Impossible!" she said, in reply to Fanny's entreaties that she would make England her home. "The only tie which could have bound me to the world is broken—the duty of watching over your future happiness has devolved on those who possess a natural claim on your affection—mine has been the claim of circumstance——"

"And gratitude!" interrupted our heroine.

"It is my consolation to feel so, Fanny!" continued her visitor; "had I cultivated your understanding only—had my instructions left you a cold, brilliant, heartless being, fitted merely to shine in the world—it would be a bitter reproach to me in the retirement to which I hasten; but your heart, your affections, naturally warm and impetuous, have been schooled, as the intellect which God has given you! My fate has been both a lesson and a warning! The man to whom you confide the destiny of your life will never win you by *calculation*!"

"It is painful—very painful—to part

with those we love!" sobbed the agitated girl; "then it is we feel how many opportunities of showing our affection have been neglected—remember the unkind words which have pained, or thoughts which have wronged them!"

"Farewell, Fanny!" said Madame Garrachi; "child of my adoption! Second only in my heart to the memory of my poor murdered boy! You will not forget your old playfellow or his unhappy mother! You will sometimes visit his grave, and see that no rude hand uproots the flowers we planted there! It is the last request I shall ever make you!"

"Oh, not the last!" exclaimed Fanny, throwing her arms around her; "you are dear—very dear to me! Instructress—friend—can no prayers, no entreaties shake this sad resolution? Remain with us—my mother, who is all tenderness and indulgence, will, I am sure, consent! If her friendship and my affection cannot efface the past from your memory, they may at least render the future happy!"

"No!" replied the ex-*prima donna*, after a mental struggle which proved how much the effort cost her; "my home henceforth is the cloister! I know all that you would urge!" she added; "its loneliness—its calm foreshadowing the peacefulness of the grave: to me these are its temptations! After a life stormy and agitated as mine has been, I require repose! Respect my religious convictions, Fanny, even as I respected yours!"

Although a fervent Catholic, Madame Garrachi had scrupulously forborne to interfere with the faith of her pupil.

To such an appeal Fanny could only reply by her tears.

"You will keep these, for my sake!" resumed the speaker, at the same time placing the *écrin* which contained her jewels upon the table. "Do not hesitate!" she added, seeing that our heroine was startled at the value of the gift. "I have no further use for them! Diamonds are for the living, not the dead: and to the world I have long been as dead! I wrong no one by bestowing them upon you—for the Revolution left me without a relative on earth; and now nothing remains but that last word —'Farewell!'"

"Not yet!—oh, not yet!"

"It must be spoken, Fanny! and for your sake, as well as my own, spoken at once! I have no right to wring your heart! I shall pray for your happiness, although I may not witness it!"

Silently she pressed her former pupil in *one long, sad* embrace, and left the room. *It was evident she feared to trust her resolution in presence of the tears* and entreaties of our heroine, the pang of separating from whom was her last great trial.

When Miss Mendez entered the library, she discovered her adopted child plunged in the deepest sorrow; still it was not without a certain degree of satisfaction she heard what had taken place. Madame Garrachi was in some degree a rival in the heart of the fair girl, and, with the exception of Clement Foster's share in it, it was her wish to engross it all.

Perhaps our readers will consider there was something ungenerous in the feeling; and if so, they are right in their judgment; but few natures are perfect. The defect in Martha's was a morbid fear lest Fanny should cease to love her. She almost regretted the magnificence of the singer's parting gift, as if it were robbing her of her right for any one to bestow diamonds upon Fanny.

It was not till a later hour of the day that our hero, after discharging his regimental duties, found himself at liberty to pay a visit to Harley Street. There was something, Miss Mendez fancied, more than usually grave in his manner—at least it was different from the joyousness of the preceding evening; and for the first time in her life, she felt doubtful of her favorite.

"Was it possible," she mentally asked herself, "that he could hesitate, when a word might secure him such a prize?"

Clement had not hesitated, but he had deliberately weighed the consequences—and the result was, that he felt it would be better for Fanny's happiness, as well as his own, that he should retire from the army. Her doubtful birth, the connection of her supposed mother with the murderer, Peter Quin, and the opposition of his father, which he foresaw, decided him.

For some time the conversation was dull. All three appeared laboring under some restraint. Had Martha ever been in love, she would at once have divined the cause; but it never entered into her imagination that her presence, as the French say, was *de trop*. The lover, unable longer to endure the painful feeling, with his usual straightforwardness, whispered in her ear, "that he wished to be left alone with Fanny."

The conscious girl would have quitted the drawing-room with her, but Clement, taking her gently by the hand, detained her.

"When the heart is burning with impatience," he said, "it cannot stand upon the cold, formal laws of ceremony! I am come to hear my doom! Speak, Fanny! Is it misery or bliss? Am I to be the happiest or the most wretched of mankind? You know my feelings—all that I would ask, all that my love demands!"

"I am unchanged!" replied our heroine, with a modest blush. "Perhaps I am wrong to speak thus plainly, but I have been reared in ignorance of the world, know nothing of its rules and prejudices! When I bestowed my affections, I gave them so entirely that it is beyond my power to recall them!"

"And would you," demanded Clement, in a tone of passionate tenderness, "say that you do not regret the promise which sets the seal upon my felicity?"

"*No!*" said Fanny, mastering her confusion. "If the simple honest love of her you have honored can make you happy, be happy—for it is wholly and unreservedly yours!"

It would be difficult to describe the rapture with which the young soldier listened to the confession so frankly made, and still more so to repeat the words in which he thanked her. Those who have loved—and who has not?—can imagine far better than we can describe them.

A long and mutual confidence followed. The unhappy girl explained to her lover the cause of her appearance upon the stage, the debt of gratitude which she had contracted to Madame Garrachi, and the struggle it had cost her to make the sacrifice—for her natural delicacy had recoiled from, rather than found pleasure in, the triumph of the *artiste*.

Her lover hung enraptured upon every word she uttered. The more he comprehended her feelings and character the deeper was his love and admiration of her conduct.

"Could my father but judge as I judge," he mentally exclaimed, "my happiness would be perfect!"

Armed by the love and acceptance of Fanny, our hero now felt that he had a right to call upon Miss Mendez for some explanation respecting the birth of her adopted child. He felt also that it was due to his parent.

"I must see Martha," he said, "before I quit the house! There must be no mystery between us! If I rightly judge her, she will not reject my entreaties for your hand! Oh, when—when," he added, pressing it fondly to his lips, "will it be mine indeed!"

It was some time before he could find resolution to tear himself away. More than once he entreated her to repeat the words which had rendered him so happy. To convince him, as he said, "that it was not a dream that the love of which he felt so proud was really his."

We need not say that our heroine complied with his solicitation; and when at last they did tear themselves from each other, she retired to her chamber, blushing, happy tears of joy resting like dew-drops on the long, silken lashes of her downcast eyes—her lips trembling with the impress of love's first kiss.

Never had it been the seal of a purer bond than the one it ratified between them.

Martha guessed in an instant the nature of the explanation which had just taken place, when she beheld the countenance of Clement radiant with joy and satisfaction. Silently she extended her hand to him: the wish nearest her heart was gratified.

"Congratulate me, my dear Miss Mendez!" he exclaimed. "I want words to tell you all my happiness!"

"I do congratulate you most sincerely!" she replied. "You have won a prize! Many will envy you the love of a truly virtuous heart! I can imagine such feelings, Clement, although it has never been my fate to experience them!"

"Then you confirm the gift?"

"Gladly, joyously!" answered Martha. "Could I have chosen a husband for Fanny from the world, you would have been my selection!"

The happy lover raised her hand to his lips.

"But there must be no concealment," she added, proudly, "from your father! My child must be wooed openly—the choice be known to the world!"

"Do you think," said our hero, "that I would insult the merits of the woman I have chosen by appearing ashamed of my choice? Do not wrong me by such a suspicion. The man who could hesitate an instant would be unworthy of her!"

"You are right!"

"This very hour, armed with her acceptance and your approval, I mean to seek my father!"

"And should he refuse his consent?" observed Miss Mendez.

"It would be a sorrow!" replied the lover, firmly; "but would not change me!"

"Noble boy!" ejaculated the lady, as he took his leave; "he has taught me my duty, and, painful as the task will be, I must perform it!"

With this resolution, so tardily arrived at, she left the room to offer her blessings and congratulations to Fanny.

The various paragraphs which had appeared in most of the morning papers—some headed "Extraordinary Scene at His Majesty's Theatre"—"Interesting Discovery of the Parent of Mademoiselle Louise"—"Romance in Real Life"—all of them giving an account more or less correct of the occurrences of the preceding night, had attracted the attention of Mr. Foster. He was perfectly aware that his rich client had discovered her real or adopted child,

and more than once, during the business of the day, found himself speculating on the consequences—for he had long been aware of the desire of Miss Mendez, in the event of Fanny being restored to her, for her marriage with his son.

"Fortunately," he muttered, "they have never met! She has appeared, too, upon the stage—and I know Clem's notions of female delicacy and propriety too well to suppose him capable of forming such an attachment!"

With all his confidence, a vague uneasiness haunted him. He was neither a stern nor an ambitious man, but highly sensitive on the score of honor. The birth of our heroine was a mystery to him. In his secret thoughts he believed her to be really the child of Martha, whose descent from Peter Quin—a name which the confession of Stork had now rendered publicly infamous—rendered the idea of an alliance between Clement and her daughter doubly distasteful.

Whilst mentally calculating on the possibility of getting his son from London for a short time, his reveries were disturbed by the sound of his voice in the outward office.

His heart misgave him, when our hero, after the usual salutation, requested to be favored with an hour's private conversation.

"Is it very important?" he demanded; "for you see I am deeply occupied with these papers! They concern the death of poor George Maitland! The body has been removed from the cellar of the house in Westminster, where the murderers had interred it, and consigned to consecrated ground! His father, who has just arrived in England, is determined to sift the affair thoroughly! The exposure will be terrible for our poor friend Miss Mendez!"

"It is of her, sir, as well as of myself, that I wish to speak!"

The old lawyer rose from his seat and drew the bolt of the door between the two offices.

"I am ready, Clem," he said—"quite ready—to hear you!"

The young soldier commenced by an account of his first meeting with Fanny at the Chateau Vert. We will pass over his description of her person, manners, and virtues. He was eloquent as most lovers are, and ended by declaring the impression she had made upon his heart, and his intention of making her his wife.

"By all means, my dear boy!" exclaimed the old gentleman, shaking him *warmly by the* hand—for as yet he dreamed *not that the fair girl he* had been describing *was the adopted* daughter of his client—"and heaven bless you both together! Where is she? Doubtless still in France?"

"On the contrary, sir—she has arrived in England!"

"Clem, you rascal—my dear boy, I mean!" said the lawyer, struck by a sudden suspicion that our hero was already married; "you have not stolen a march on your old father! You are not——"

He paused, and looked smiling in the face of his son.

"Married!" added the captain, finishing the sentence for him. "No sir—not yet!"

"Right, my boy! All fair and above board with your father! Tell me where is the dear girl?"

"At the house of her mother in Harley Street!"

At the words "Harley Street," the smiles vanished from the countenance of the old lawyer.

"You do not mean," he said, "that the young lady whose name fills so conspicuous a paragraph in the morning papers, the daughter of Martha Mendez, and the object of your choice, are one and the same person?"

"Even so, father!"

"And you ask my consent to your marriage?"

"As the crowning act of your love and kindness to me!" replied his son. "Nay, do not answer me till you have heard all that I have to urge!"

"That is but just!" observed the old man, gloomily. "Proceed!"

"I love her, father—not with that boyish feeling which lasts for a time and changes with each fresh face—but with the devotion of manhood—the deep, true passion of reason and conviction! There is no other woman upon earth who can render me happy! I have reflected on my choice and its consequences! I am prepared to quit the army!"

"And so break a career which promises to end so honorably!" interrupted his parent, passionately; "Clement, this is folly—madness—infatuation! I will not insult you by supposing that you are influenced by the probable amount of the girl's fortune—for I should scorn you if wealth could guide you in the choice of a wife; but reputation ought!"

"Hers is unspotted!" replied the lover.

"She has been an actress?"

"But for two nights!"

"Her birth?"

"Even if it proves, as you suppose, illegitimate," urged his son, "she is not to be blamed for that! Were anything less than my happiness at stake, your wish would be my law! I have exercised the right of nature and of manhood, in selecting the future

partner of my life—have proposed and been accepted!"

"Madman! What have you done? The descendant of a murderer—nay, possibly the daughter of one of the ruffians who perpetrated the cruel deed! Have you weighed well the consequences of such an alliance—the stain upon your name—the finger of scorn which will pursue you—the contempt, the pity of all who know and blush for your weakness?"

"Everything!" replied Clement, turning very pale—for he began to see that all hope of obtaining his father's consent was at an end.

"Not everything!" said the old man, sternly; "there is one consequence more terrible yet—your father's curse, should you dishonor his grey hairs and honest name, by an alliance with the child of Martha Mendez!"

"You will not curse me, father!" observed the young man, seriously; "for it is not in your nature to be unjust!"

"Disinherit you!" added the lawyer.

"Oh, let that be the only penalty," continued our hero, "and I will endure it patiently! The fortune you have obtained by honorable labor you have a right to dispossess me of—but not of your affection—I have nature's claim to that—I inherit it by right of blood—my mother's memory—the love and duty which till this hour have waited on your wishes!"

"You are right, Clement Foster!" replied the old man, deeply moved; "I cannot curse my only child:"

"Your blessing, father!" eagerly exclaimed his son.

"Blessings are for the obedient; not the rebellious, headstrong boy, whose vaunted duty and affection vanish at the breath of passion! My resolution is taken! From the hour which sees you the husband of the daughter of Martha Mendez, we are strangers!"

As he uttered these brief, harsh words, the speaker rose, and, walking to the door, withdrew the bolt—a sign to our hero that the conference was ended. Poor Clement left the office silently and with a heavy heart: he would fain have shaken his father by the hand, in token that they parted at least without hostile feelings towards each other; but the lawyer drew coldly back from the proffered pledge.

"As I suspected!" he murmured, as he threaded the well-known avenues of the Temple; "his prejudices are not to be vanquished! If he had but seen her!" he added; "if he had but seen her!"

At first he felt disposed to blame his own precipitation, which had produced the dreaded crisis. A few moments' reflection, however, convinced him that he had acted rightly: there would have been something degrading to the object of his love in keeping their engagement a secret from his father.

Little did he imagine that the old man had already determined to see her—with what intention will appear at another time and place.

CHAPTER LII.

The course of true love never doth run smooth.
SHAKSPEARE.

BITTERLY did Miss Mendez reproach herself when Clement Foster informed her of the result of his interview with his father, and the old man's objections to his union with Fanny. Had she, when first she became acquainted with the lawyer, confided to him the history of her adopted child—placed in his hands the clue she possessed—there could be little doubt that he would long ere this have discovered the mystery of her birth.

"I need not say," continued our hero, "that my father's prejudice is a source of the deepest uneasiness—for he has ever been a kind and indulgent parent to me—but, above all, I fear its effects upon the susceptible mind of Fanny! It would strike a cruel blow to her happiness! We must conceal it from her!"

"Will that be possible?" demanded Martha. "Although young and ignorant of the world, she is gifted with no common share of penetration! No!" she added, musingly; "those who have sinned must bear the punishment! Oh, Clement, I have acted selfishly, if not wickedly!"

"How am I to understand you?"

"That Fanny is not my child!" she continued; "nay, do not doubt me, or let a false delicacy induce you to conceal from me the truth that Mr. Foster's objection to this alliance arises from the dear girl's supposed relationship to me!"

"Not to you!" said our hero, soothingly—for he saw that she was greatly excited—"he still regards you with respect and admiration for your many excellent qualities; but to your grandfather, whose name has lately become ——"

He paused, and hesitated to finish the sentence.

"*Infamous!*" added Martha, completing it for him; "I know it—FEEL it! The very servant who stands behind my chair boasts to his companions that he is not descended from a hired murderer! I have reflected,

and, even at the risk of losing the affection of my child, have determined to unveil the mystery—you must assist me!"

"Willingly!" replied Clement, who secretly rejoiced at the positive assurance he had just received; "but let me entreat you, think more justly both of yourself and Fanny! If you are not her parent, you have bestowed on her a parent's love! Her earliest recollections are of you—her feelings towards you must ever be those of a fond, affectionate child!

"I would fain believe so!" observed Miss Mendez, mournfully; "at least I will endeavor to preserve her love, by following the dictates of duty! I have some reason to believe that the only person who can fully clear up the mystery of Fanny's birth is now in England—although for many reasons he wishes his residence here to be kept a secret—but, most of all, from me!"

"Might not money induce him?"

"Money," interrupted the woman, bitterly, "is useless! He is rich!"

"His name?"

"Sir John Mordaunt!"

"The owner of Brierly Grange!" exclaimed Clement Foster, with surprise.

"In all probability you will find him difficult of access—his residence at the house denied by the servants—more," she added, "it may be dangerous to penetrate to his presence; but once arrived there, and the letter I will give you placed in his hand, the danger ceases! Take George with you—you can rely on his prudence and fidelity!"

"I would trust my life to them!" replied her hearer; "yet I cannot understand why a man of his rank and fortune should thus conceal himself!"

Martha smiled.

"Fortune again!" she said; "I thought you judged the world better, Clement! Gold will buy its observance and pleasures, but not its respect or *safety!*"

"Safety?"

"Question me not!" she continued; "for I can explain nothing! Success depends upon my silence!"

Her visitor urged her no further, and it was arranged between them that he should start upon his expedition into Berkshire the following day, and that the real cause of his absence should be kept a secret from Fanny—nothing was more easy than to allege military duty as an excuse. Under ordinary circumstances the want of ingenuousness would have revolted him; but the motive for once appeared to justify the want of confidence—it spared the being whom he loved unnecessary pain.

Despite his efforts to appear cheerful, *Fanny quickly discovered* that some sacret uneasiness was preying upon his mind. Her questions added to his embarrassment—he was a poor dissembler.

"I do not ask your confidence!" she observed, as he took his leave; "for, to be valued by me, it must be offered freely! If it be a sorrow, Clement, do not let your affection for me cause you to confine it to your own breast! Such burthens become lighter by being shared with those we love!"

"On the contrary!" exclaimed her lover, as he bid her a last adieu; "it is a *hope!*"

The animation with which these words were uttered and the look of passionate tenderness which accompanied them, almost convinced her that her fears were groundless.

From that day Miss Mendez became so deeply occupied in affairs evidently of a private nature, that our heroine was left almost entirely to herself, and gladly seized the occasion to visit her former friends, Mrs. Watkins, the blind lieutenant, and the rest of the inmates of the house in St. Martin's Court.

As for Sally and her husband, she was aware that they were still—thanks to the liberality of Martha—in Italy, where the young painter was rapidly advancing in fortune as well as reputation in his art.

It was on her return from one of these visits that the servant informed her a gentleman was waiting to see her in the library.

"Did he ask for me," she inquired, "or for your mistress?"

"For you!" replied the man.

"By name?"

"Yes, miss!"

Fanny was puzzled to imagine who the gentleman could be; she knew no one. Miss Mendez was from home, and the idea struck her that the visit might originally have been intended for her. With this impression she decided upon seeing the gentleman.

With all his prejudice, the lawyer—for it was the father of our hero—could not help confessing, when the fair girl entered the room, that he had never beheld a more lovely being. The instant she saw him she guessed his name, from the strong resemblance to his son.

"Mr. Foster, I presume?" she said.

"Yes—Foster is my name!" replied the old gentleman; "and now that I have seen you, the task I have imposed upon myself becomes doubly painful!"

"Has anything occurred to Clement—to your son, I mean, sir?" demanded our heroine, the blush fading from her cheek and a deadly paleness succeeding.

"On that score," said her visitor, "I am happy to say I am not the bearer of unpleasant intelligence! Clement, for aught

I have any reason to suppose to the contrary, is well—quite well—although he parted in anger from his father!"

"In anger, sir?"

"My dear young lady," said the lawyer, "allow me to explain the motive of my visit candidly: I must then leave it to your own good sense and feeling to decide!"

Poor Fanny felt a sudden sickening sensation at her heart—a foreboding of what was about to follow came over her.

"Although a military career was not the one I should have chosen for my boy," resumed the speaker, "he has distinguished himself so nobly in it that the most brilliant prospects appeared opening to him! As a father, I need not say that I felt proud of him; but he is about to quit the army!"

"Quit the army?" repeated Fanny, mechanically. "May I ask the cause of a determination to which at present I am a stranger?"

"His approaching marriage with yourself!"

"Which you disapprove of, sir!" replied the agitated girl. "I read it in the coldness of your manner—the studied—pardon the expression—the forced courtesy of your tone in speaking to me!"

"Had the happiness of my son alone been concerned," added Mr. Foster, "my consent would have been freely given; but his honor will be compromised!"

The rich blood rushed to the cheek of Fanny, who drew herself up proudly, and gazed upon the speaker long and earnestly.

"His honor," she answered, at last, "is dear to me as my own—and both, I believe, are without a stain! There is some mystery in this which I cannot comprehend: explain it, sir—for pity's sake, explain it! If I am ignorant of the world, I am not the less sensible of the duties and obligations which it imposes, or unwilling to fulfil them! How can your son's marriage with me inflict a stain upon his honor?"

As gently as possible the lawyer proceeded to relate to her the history of Peter Quin and the mystery which shrouded her own birth, and concluded by adding, that had she been the child of any person but Martha Mendez ——"

"Hold, sir!" interrupted our heroine; "respect the parent in the presence of her child; the memory of the murderer you have a right, in common with all good men, to brand and execrate; but you have none to attempt to weaken my affection for the best and tenderest of mothers! You have made me very unhappy!" she added, bursting into tears; "but I forgive you!"

Mr. Foster was deeply moved by her distress; it was impossible to gaze on so much candor and ingenuousness and not feel the injustice of visiting upon her innocent head the errors of others. He even so far forgot his prejudices as to hint that if it were possible to conceal from the world the unfortunate relationship, his objection might yet be got over.

"By a falsehood!" observed Fanny; "by an act of ingratitude to the author of my being—by consenting to a lie! I will point out to you, sir, a better way!"

Her visitor gazed upon her with surprise.

"By renouncing the hope of happiness!" she continued; "sacrificing the feelings, wishes, and dreams of my heart at the shrine of duty! It may break in the struggle, but it will break nobly! For the crimes of Peter Quin—from whom you say I am descended, although the world judges differently—I feel that I am no way responsible; but I am for the honor and happiness of your son! I will never bring disgrace upon the name of him I love! Henceforth all that has passed between us is cancelled, and ——"

She would have added "forgotten," but tears impeded her utterance. Never before, in the course of his long and honorable career, had Mr. Foster received so humiliating a lesson: the inconsistency of his conduct had been rebuked by the innocence of a child.

During their interview Martha had returned home, and, hearing of his visit, had assisted unobserved at the latter part of their conversation: the expressions of love and devotion from her adopted child had amply repaid her for the care and affection she had bestowed on her.

Advancing from the breakfast room, she eagerly embraced our heroine, and, turning to the lawyer, thanked him, in a sarcastic tone, for his generous conduct in her absence.

"You forget," he observed, "that I have a son?"

"Who, thank heaven, is free from the narrow prejudices of his father!" retorted Miss Mendez; "you plead your own right as a parent for seeking to destroy the respect of mine for her mother! Shame, man—shame!"

It was the second rebuke Mr. Foster had received, and he began to feel that his prejudices had carried him too far.

"Had I really been the degraded, wretched being you suppose me," continued the woman, with increased animation, "my claim to the love of my offspring would not have been less sacred! Accustomed to deal with the falsehood of mankind, you suspected my truth when I told you that Fanny was not my child!"

"Not your child!" exclaimed the astonished girl. "Oh, unsay those cruel

words—my heart refuses to believe them! I remember your affection—the tears you shed over me in infancy—your patient sweetness and untiring care! Confess that you are my parent, or my heart will break!"

"No, Fanny—the hour for dissimulation has passed; it has been the one great error of my life, and it is just that I atone it! You were stolen from your natural protector when an infant, and confided to my care. I was a lonely, solitary creature, without one tie in common with my fellow-creatures—a single being in the world to love me! Can you wonder that you became so dear to me? Your birth, I have every reason to suppose, is noble! in a few hours I shall possess the proofs!"

"May I really credit this extraordinary tale?" demanded the lawyer; "and yet, when I reflect upon your character for truth and sincerity, it is impossible to doubt it!"

"Leave this gentleman to his reflections!" said Martha, gently leading our heroine from the room; "and when he remembers the many years of friendship that have existed between us, unless his nature be quite changed, I think he will regret his ungenerous conduct to an unhappy being who fancied that at least she had one friend on whom she could rely!"

As they were about to quit the room the footman appeared, ushering in the reader's old acquaintance, Duncan—no longer in the dress of a soldier—for Lord Peapod had procured his discharge. He had obtained the address of Fanny from his lordship. The poor fellow came to reclaim the packet which he had confided to her care a few moments before his arrest at the Chateau Vert.

No sooner did the eyes of the lawyer catch the address than he became greatly excited, and claimed it as his property; declaring that it had been stolen from his office several years since.

"Impossible!" replied the man; "Colonel Harrington assured me that it had been intrusted to him by my dead master!"

"And who was your master?"

"Edward Trevanian, sir!"

The explanation which followed convinced the faithful fellow that he could not place the deposit so sacredly confided to him in better hands than those of Mr. Foster, whose joy at obtaining possession of it in some degree compensated him for the mortification he had just endured. With something like an apology to Fanny for the pain he had caused her, he returned with the will to the Temple.

CHAPTER LIII.

Strange tales are told.
The shepherd shuns the spot, deeming it haunted.
OLD PLAY.

WHEN Clement Foster and his faithful servant George arrived in the neighborhood of Brierly Grange, instead of proceeding at once to the house, they took up their quarters for the night at a farm whose tenant was distantly related to the latter. As for our hero, time and his military campaign had so changed him that none of the old familiar faces which he remembered appeared to have retained the least recollection of him—they stared upon him as he drove through the village as upon a stranger.

"And so, farmer," said the ex-gamekeeper, as they were seated at their evening meal, "the old house, you say, is shut up!"

"Yes, George, it be, and the servants discharged!"

"Ay!" interrupted his wife; "all but housekeeper and steward: and I wonder they stay in such a place!"

"You speak, I presume," observed our hero, "of the fine old mansion which we passed on the way to your farm?"

"It be fine enough!" muttered the good dame; "too fine, perhaps, for those who inhabit it! It be no use, Thomas!" she continued, compelled at last to notice the nods, winks, and warning looks of her husband, who, having been born and bred upon the Mordaunt estate, did not like to hear anything which might be construed into disrespect against its owners; "but either Sir John be come back or the place be haunted!"

"Pshaw!" ejaculated the old man, pettishly; "why should Sir John—who is a *barrownight*, and one of the richest men in the country—hide in his own house like a thief ashamed to show his face!"

"Farmer Gunter saw un, Thomas, and the lights at night in the north wing!"

"After leaving the public-house!" replied the master of the farm; "and then no sensible man would pay the least attention to anything Farmer Gunter sees! If the servants have been sent away, it be for *'conomy*, or something of that kind; and as for the lights in the north wing, I never heard o' them before!"

There are few wives, however excellent, who can bear to be flatly contradicted by their husbands, especially when they feel that they are right. On the present occasion it was doubly galling, being in the presence of her relative, George, and the officer gentleman, his master. Had the farmer been a tactician, he would have permitted the surmises, hints, and on dits of the dame

to pass without contradiction—for contradiction, woman like, put her upon her mettle, and caused her to array facts as well as suppositions against him.

"Didn't Luke, the postboy, from Old Windsor, say, in this very room, he drove Horrocks, the steward, and a stranger to the Grange three nights after the servants had gone?"

"Luke is a fool, my dear!"

"Fool or no fool, you can't deny it!" retorted his wife; "and the gentleman who has been seen at midnight walking about the park?"

"Some friend of the housekeeper's!"

"And the eggs and fowls we have orders to send daily to the hall?"

This was a clincher. The farmer lit his pipe and took refuge in silence. Had he been wise he would have done so at first.

Our hero and his companion had heard quite enough to assure them that some one had taken up his abode at the Grange who, for reasons best known to himself, desired his residence there to be kept a secret—and who more likely than its owner. The following morning, accompanied by George, he quitted the farm, and directed his steps towards the mansion.

There is something inexpressibly sad in revisiting a place which we have inhabited in our youth, especially when those who once made it a happy home are no longer there to welcome us. Frequently during their walk Clement paused to contemplate some well-known spot, and point it out to his companion. There was the home-wood, where he shot his first bird—well did he recollect the pride and satisfaction he experienced on the occasion, and the dispute he had had with the keeper as to whether the unlucky partridge had been fairly on the wing or not. Then there was the walk in which he used to saunter with Miss Wyndham and Martha; the stile where they awaited his return after a day's sport, examined his gibern, and laughed or congratulated him on its contents.

As they reached the front of the house, George silently pointed to the window over the porch, at which he had thrown up the gravel to alarm him on the night of Miles' attempt to obtain possession of the papers in the cabinet of Peter Quin.

"I have not forgotten it," said Clement Foster, "or that in all probability Miss Mendez owes her life to your presence of mind!"

"Say rather to yours, sir! You shot the robber—I merely gave the alarm!"

"We will divide the merit between us, then!" replied his master.

"Do you intend to call at the house, sir?"

"*Certainly! It is not a feeling of mere idle curiosity which urges me*—I should blush to be guilty of an intrusion urged by such a motive; but the happiness of my life in some degree depends on my obtaining an interview with Sir John Mordaunt!"

"You really believe that he is there, sir?"

"I have not the least doubt of it!" answered Clement; "such, too, is the conviction of Miss Mendez; but we must be cautious in our proceedings—he doubtless has powerful reasons for concealment!"

"If at the Grange," observed the ex-gamekeeper, who had known the place from childhood, "I'll ferret him out! He must be clever indeed to play at hide-and-seek with me! I could hunt every nook blindfolded!"

It was some time before their summons at the hall-door was answered. When the old housekeeper at last appeared, she was so flurried that both our hero and George had to make themselves known to her.

"She was happy to see them—very happy!" she said; then hesitated, muttered something about the house being shut, and finally, as if ashamed at her want of hospitality, asked them if they wished to walk in and rest themselves.

"*Wish to walk in!*" repeated George; "of course we do! Captain Clement has run down on purpose to see the old place again! He thinks of taking it!"

Mrs. Everett informed them that it was no longer to let.

"Sir John coming home at last?" demanded the persevering querist.

The housekeeper eagerly assured him that there was not the least probability of such an event—at least in her time. His health was so bad—Italy agreed with him—in short, gave a hundred unnecessary reasons why the baronet should not return to the seat of his forefathers. Our hero pitied her confusion, and followed the reluctant steps of the old lady as she led the way to her own room: he felt there was something cruel in making her regard for him the means of betraying her duty to her master.

The eyes of both her visitors, on entering the cosy little apartment of Mrs. Everett, rested upon a tray standing on the centre of the table. On it were a dish of cold game and a bottle of claret; they noticed also several articles of plate with the Mordaunt Arms engraved upon them.

A mutual glance, conveying the conviction that Sir John was really in the house passed between them.

"Why, one would imagine you expected us," observed George, "from the preparation you have made! Just the thing for the captain's lunch!"

And, without further ceremony, he drew the tray towards his master.

To hide her confusion, the housekeeper began to converse in a very hurried manner —asked a hundred questions after Miss Mendez and the governess; then, without waiting for an answer, started again with some fresh subject.

"Get me a glass of water," George!" said our hero, who had ascertained that there was none upon the table; and, before Mrs. Everett could prevent it, by offering her services, the quick-witted fellow, who perfectly understood the hint, quitted the room; she appeared nervous and excited till his return.

"I must leave you, Master—I beg pardon, Mr. Clement—for a few minutes! I have something to attend to! Of course you will not think of quitting the apartment —the house, I mean—till my return!"

"Certainly not!" replied her visitor, pretending not to notice her embarrassment; "I am tired after my walk, and feel exceedingly comfortable here; but I should wish very much to see the picture-gallery before I leave!"

"He is here!" whispered the ex-gamekeeper, as soon as they were alone; "from the window of the kitchen I noticed the chimneys of the house! There is a fire in what was formerly Miss Wyndham's dressing room! You know the one I mean, sir?"

"Over the north porch?"

George nodded in the affirmative.

"We have not an instant to lose!" added the honest fellow; "the old lady has doubtless left us to inform him of our arrival! She has gone up the great staircase—to see, probably, that there is nothing to betray her master being here in the picture-gallery. By crossing the servants' hall, we may reach his hiding-place before her! Are you armed, sir?"

"I am! But why do you ask? What motive can Sir John Mordaunt have to avoid me?"

"Strange race, sir—a very strange race!" observed the man; "I have heard my grandfather tell such tales of them. If only one half were true, we can't be too cautious! We had better proceed at once!"

Our hero thought so, too, and both quitted the room. On reaching the passage at the entrance of the servants' hall, they found that the housekeeper had taken the precaution of barring the door—so that all means of communication were cut off with the rest of the house.

"*The old fox*!" exclaimed George; "*does she think we come to rob the place, or intend to keep us prisoners?*"

Returning to the room they had so lately quitted, he procured a carving-knife, which, after some little exertion, he contrived to introduce between the interstices of the door, and forced back the bolt.

"Now, then, captain!" he exclaimed, "it is our last chance!"

On reaching the former apartment of Miss Wyndham, they heard the voice of the housekeeper in a subdued tone. She was evidently justifying her conduct to some one who imagined he had a right to blame it.

Clement scorned to listen. Taking the letter of Miss Mendez from his pocket-book, he opened the door, and walked boldly into the room.

Standing near the chimney was a man who had evidently passed the prime of life, although he still retained traces of great personal strength and activity.

"You infernal old hag!" our hero heard him exclaim, as he entered the room; "have I not told you that my safety depends upon ——"

The step of Clement caught his ear. He looked up. It was fearful to note the deadly scowl which rested for an instant on his features. Taking a pistol from the mantelpiece, he levelled it with the utmost deliberation at the intruder's head, and fired.

Fortunately for his intended victim, his deliberation gave time to the housekeeper to recover from her surprise and to catch his arm. The bullet lodged in the ceiling.

"Sir John!" she screamed, "would you commit murder?"

Before the baronet—for it was no other than the owner of Brierly Grange—could arm himself with a second weapon, his visitor, calm and unruffled as if nothing had occurred, walked up to him and placed the letter in his hand.

"From Martha Quin!" he said.

At the name of the writer, Sir John Mordaunt turned very pale.

"And who," he demanded, pointing to George, who stood at the door, "is that man?"

"My servant!" replied Clement, in the same unruffled tone. "Doubtless the pistol which you *accidentally* discharged alarmed him for my safety!"

The baronet regarded him for a few seconds in silence, then broke the seal of the letter, which he read over once or twice.

"Captain Foster," he said, extending towards his visitor the hand which had so lately been raised against his life, "I am most happy to see you at Brierly Grange, and can only express my deep regret for the *little inadvertence* which might have ended less agreeably!"

The young soldier could not avoid mentally acknowledging the great tact of the

speaker, against whom he determined to remain upon his guard.

"You will dine with me?" continued Sir John Mordaunt, in the same easy, familiar tone; "although I fear that I cannot promise you much in the way of a dinner—for I have been in England only a few days: but my housekeeper—who, it seems, is an old acquaintance of yours—will do her best!"

"Mad!" muttered the old lady; "he must be mad!"

"In the morning I shall be happy to accompany you to London, and renew my acquaintance with my valued friend Martha! Let fires be lit in the drawing-room," added the owner of Brierly Grange, "and leave us! Captain Foster and I will amuse ourselves by walking through the village together before dinner."

"Is this bravado," thought Clement, "or recklessness?" He could not comprehend the sudden change.

We, however, will explain it. The only living witness, as Sir John Mordaunt imagined, of his past career, was Martha Quin; and her letter had informed him of the conditions on which he might secure her silence. Hence the sudden change in his conduct to her messenger.

CHAPTER LIV.

He is a man ready and apt in council,
Fitted to track the devious windings
Of crime's most secret labyrinth: and seize
The monster in its den. OLD PLAY.

It was with a joyousness almost amounting to boisterous hilarity that Sir John Mordaunt did the honors of his mansion to his unexpected guest. His manner reminded our hero of the wild gaiety of a schoolboy suddenly releived from the dread of punishment, rather than the polished courtesy of the man of the world. Clement was puzzled to understand the change, which was too sudden to throw him off his guard.

The baronet walked with him through the village, chatted with his tenants, spoke of keeping open house on his return from London, and even hinted at his intention of standing for the county in the next election. Not a word, however, escaped him to explain to his companion the nature of his former acquaintance with Martha Quin.

"I believe, Captain Foster," he said, as they strolled together through the picture-gallery, on their return to the house, "you formerly inhabited this place?"

The young soldier replied that he had been a frequent visitor at the Grange during its occupation by Miss Mendez.

"Strange," muttered the baronet, half aloud, "that she should have selected my house!"

Clement remembered the instructions he had received to ask no questions, and forbore to demand why a circumstance which appeared so natural and unimportant should strike the speaker as being singular: but he noted the observation.

"And here it was," continued his host, "that you saved the life of Martha! Humph! well, I begin to think," he added, "that there is something more than chance in the course of events, after all! Will you oblige me my relating the particulars of your adventure? I have heard a confused account of it from the housekeeper, who makes you out a perfect hero! Women always exaggerate—not that I doubt either your *coolness or tact!*"

The half-smile which accompanied the observation proved that he was thinking of the scene which had so lately taken place between them, in which his guest had undoubtedly displayed both the qualities he mentioned.

Clement at once described the affair as it had occurred. When he came to the struggle between the housebreaker and Martha, he noticed that the features of Sir John betrayed great excitement. He proceeded in his narration till he came to the shot and the agony of suspense he endured till he had ascertained which of the two had received it, and the transition from doubt to joy he experienced when he discovered that Miss Mendez was unhurt.

His companion grasped his hand.

"A lucky shot, indeed!" he exclaimed; "the best you ever made! Miles was a coarse ruffian—a very butcher at his trade! Would I had been present to help you!"

The narrator wondered how he came to be so well acquainted with the fellow's name; but supposed Mrs. Everett had informed him; and concluded by describing the death of the housebreaker, and the long interview which had taken place between him and Miss Mendez.

"Do you know what passed?" eagerly demanded Sir John.

"Not the remotest idea!" replied his visitor: "the lady either deemed me too young, or probably had other motives for withholding her confidence!"

The querist gazed upon him for some moments, as if he doubted the truth of his assertion; but there was nothing in the countenance of the young man to warrant the supposition that he was deceiving him.

"Not unlikely!" he muttered, at last.

"Martha was always a strange creature—I never could make her out!"

"*Always!*" mentally observed Clement; 'that implies a knowledge of years!"

"Do you know," continued the speaker, as if anxious to change the subject, "that the death of Miles is not the only terrible transaction which has taken place in this gallery! It was here that Geoffrey and Richard Mordaunt—two of my ancestors—fought their unnatural duel; both were killed; but Mrs. Everett doubtless has related the affair, and pointed out the stains of blood upon the oaken floor!"

His guest informed him that it was the first time he had heard of the event he alluded to.

"The old woman has been more discreet than her master," replied Sir John; "for I fear it reflects but little credit on their memory! It was here," he continued; "that my grandfather cursed and drove from his home his only son—my unhappy father! The old man had all the pride, ambition and evil qualities of his race, without one of the generous disposition which might have redeemed them! I don't mind relating to you that portion of my family history—it will pass away the time till dinner; that is," he added, "provided you can find sufficient interest in the story to listen to it!"

Clement assured him that he should be most happy to hear it.

"It was impossible," he said, "to have been so frequently a visitor at the Grange without feeling some degree of curiosity respecting the family who had inhabited it! I have walked in this spot," he added, "for hours, contemplating the fine old portraits upon the walls, speculating on the history and character of the originals, and frequently, when a boy, have questioned Handcock and the housekeeper on the subject. About your remote ancestors they were communicative enough. There is scarcely a legend connected with those steel-clad gentlemen and stately dames that I am not as well acquainted with as yourself; but at the name of your grandfather, father, or your own, they suddenly stopped!"

"I believe they have been faithful!" observed the baronet; "not that there is much to conceal! It is a tale which may be told I believe, in most families! My father loved a poor but virtuous girl; had he seduced her, his parent doubtless would have lectured him in the most edifying manner on the immorality of his conduct—for he was very strict in his religious duties—relented, and forgiven him; but he married *the object of his affection*, and his father's *wrath became implacable*; he cursed, drove *him from the Grange, and*, but for the entail, would have disinherited him! I am the only issue of that unhappy union!"

"Not unhappy," observed his companion, "if they loved!"

"Thank you!" exclaimed the baronet; "I like that observation—it sounds frank and fresh as if spoken from the heart! Well, then, they were happy—for they loved, if ever human beings did! At the age of twelve I became an orphan! I will not occupy your time," he added, "by relating my trials and struggles, hair-breadth 'scapes and adventures *in other lands*, till the death of my unforgiving grandfather placed me in possession both of his title and estate, much to the annoyance of my politic cousin, Sir Richard Trevanian, who did all in his power to keep alive the old man's animosity and hunt me to destruction! My appearance was a terrible blow to him, and disapppointed all his calculations!"

"Sir Richard Trevanian?" repeated our hero.

"Yes!"

"Your cousin?"

"Did I not tell you so?" replied Sir John Mordaunt, "perhaps you knew him?"

"But slightly," said our hero; "but his son, the present baronet, was once my friend, till I discovered that he was cold, treacherous, calculating, and heartless!"

"Runs in the blood!" observed the master of Brierly Grange, drily; "we are a bad race, root and branch; all that I inherit of good—if I have any in my disposition—I inherit from my plebeian mother! And now that you know as much of my history as I know myself, he added, "let us leave this gloomy picture-gallery, and see what Mrs. Everett has provided for dinner. Your reception was rather an equivocal one, I confess; but you are not the less welcome now that I know you and your errand!"

He extended his hand as he concluded, and Clement Foster, whose kindlier feelings were awakened by the narration of his host, grasped it with something like cordiality. The baronet appeared highly pleased with his new acquaintance, and they both descended to the dining-room, where George and the steward were waiting to attend upon them. At the sight of the former, the baronet appeared annoyed; perhaps he thought that it implied suspicion on the part of his guest.

"You need not wait, George," said his master; "as we start in a couple of hours for town, you had better see that the horses are ready!"

The faithful fellow left the room with an air of reluctance.

"Thank you!" whispered his host; "you have more confidence, I perceive, than your

domestic, who evidently does not *comprehend* the little *contretemps* of the pistol when we first met! Few," he added, with a smile, "possess the tact and discernment of Captain Foster! May you soon be a colonel!"

"I am about to leave the army!" replied our hero.

"At your age?"

"I have seen enough of campaigning!" replied his guest, warmly; "besides, the war is over, and I have no wish to remain a mere 'moth of peace,' as Shakspeare has it!"

"Perhaps you are in love?" observed Sir John.

Clement colored deeply: not at the observation so much as at the *brusquerie* with which it was made. He knew not why, but he felt that it would be imprudent to intrust him with the secret of his engagement with the adopted child of Martha Mendez.

Two hours later, they started in the baronet's travelling chaise for London, where they expected to arrive at an early hour on the following morning.

There is something in mystery and concealment which naturally depresses an ingenuous mind. During his journey the young soldier had leisure to analyse the nature of the impression which his companion had made on his naturally unsuspicious nature, and the result, despite his assumed friendship, was decidedly unfavorable. He could neither account for his desire of concealment, nor the sudden ostentatious manner in which he had made known his presence at Brierly Grange to the tenants and neighborhood; and he shuddered lest the fate of Fanny should in any way be linked with that of a man whom, despite his rank and fortune, he felt inclined to regard as a desperate adventurer. More than once he asked himself if he were really the personage he appeared, or had assumed a station to which he had no claim. Clement had both read and heard of such impostures, and Sir John appeared to him a man likely in every way to carry such an attempt successfully.

"If Martha would only speak plainly," he thought, "I might obtain a clue to all this mystery which threatens my happiness, although it cannot shake my confidence in her integrity. But no—she is as complete an enigma as the baronet himself!"

On reaching London, he drove with his companion at once to Harley Street. The mistress of the house alone was visible. The meeting between two such old acquaintances was a singular one; but his travelling companion appeared the more embarrassed *of the two*: he held out his hand, which Martha at first did not appear to notice.

"Am I to conclude," said the baronet, assuming an air of dignity, "that my visit is an unwelcome one? If so, let it be made as brief as possible!"

"Certainly not!" said the lady; "I have long and anxiously desired this meeting! I need not remind Sir John Mordaunt that there are many recollections and feelings which render it an embarrassing one!"

"Not for you!" was the reply.

"For both of us!" resumed Martha; "but in token that my intentions are amicable," she added, "accept my proferred hand!"

Her visitor grasped it cordially. Clement Foster could not avoid observing the difficulty with which she suppressed a shudder as she did so.

"You must do me a second service," observed Miss Mendez to our hero, after she had warmly welcomed his return; "see your father and request him to call upon me at twelve precisely—you can return with him! I do not ask you to remain now—for I have many private matters to arrange with Sir John Mordaunt!"

"One word!" whispered our hero, as he left the room, "is the destiny of Fanny in any way mixed up with that of your guest?"

"Yes, and no!" answered Miss Mendez.

"I do not comprehend you!"

"His evidence is necessary to elucidate the mystery of her birth!"

"He is not, then, related to her? She is not his child?"

"Heaven forbid!" replied Martha, in a tone which betrayed how deeply such an event would afflict her. "I would rather see her the child of the humblest peasant—nay, the descendant of Peter Quin himself"—she added, bitterly, "than the acknowledged daughter of that bold, bad man—the heiress of his name and fortune! Dismiss your fears, Clement—Fanny will prove worthy of you!"

With this assurance the young man left the house: he would fain have first obtained an interview with our heroine; but Miss Mendez for once was peremptory with him.

"It can only be," she said, "in the presence and with the sanction of your father!"

"The *sanction* of my father!" he repeated; "Martha must be very confident in her proofs, to dream of his sanction! But with it or without it," he mentally added, "Fanny shall be my wife! The world, its opinions, prejudices, and laws—pshaw! what are they, when balanced against happiness?"

During the whispered conversation be-

tween Clement and his former acquaintance, Sir John Mordaunt betrayed by his looks the anxiety he endured.

"Deal frankly with me, Martha!" he exclaimed, as soon as they were alone; "is it peace or war between us!"

"Peace!" replied the woman, meekly.

"Then why did you hesitate—and before *him*, too—to take my hand, after I had obeyed your summons, and trusted myself in your power?"

"Because there is blood upon it!" answered Miss Mendez, in a low whisper; "I know it, and you know it, too!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the baronet, with affected bravado; "time has effaced it!"

Martha shook her head reprovingly.

"It has hidden but not effaced it!" she said; "the only water to wash out the stains are the tears of penitence, which you will never shed! Prosperity has hardened your heart!"

"Did you send for me to read me a homily?" he demanded; "methinks you might have contented yourself with writing one!"

"No!" replied the woman; "I sent for you to make a compact with you—to enable you for once to perform a good action and to atone for a bad one! The child you stole—every circumstance connected with it must be revealed! Her happiness, as well as mine, depends on the discovery!"

"And pray what am I to gain by such a piece of Quixotism?" demanded her visitor; "by unveiling a portion of my past life to the curiosity of the world? The bribe ought to be a high one!"

"It is!" said the grand-daughter of his former associate; "although it has not been without a struggle that I have induced myself to offer it—to forego the calls of justice at those of affection for my adopted child—SAFETY—the bribe of reposing in peace—of being able to face your fellowmen—walking with your head erect in the world—of days of pleasure—nights free from the dreams of the hangman and the scaffold! Be seated, Sir John Mordaunt, and listen to the terms I propose!"

So long and interesting was the conference which ensued, that mid-day elapsed before it was concluded; even then it was only broken by the return of Clement Foster. During the absence of our hero, a perfect understanding appeared to have been established between Miss Mendez and her visitor. The air of the baronet was easy and unembarrassed—that of the lady, thoughtful, but satisfied.

The lawyer felt slightly confused at *meeting* his old friend and client for the first *time after the somewhat* ungenerous conduct he had shown at his last visit. Martha appeared to have forgotten it, or feelings of a more absorbing interest prevented her making the least allusion to the subject Perhaps she wished to spare his son the pain of knowing how deeply his father had wounded both herself and the object of his love.

"My son informs me that you wished to see me!" observed the old man; "if there is any way in which either my friendship or professional services can be of use, I need not say that Miss Mendez may command them!"

"Your professional services, certainly!" replied Martha; "and perhaps your friendship: not that you will require a second influence in unravelling this perplexed affair! Permit me," she added, "to introduce Sir John Mordaunt, of Brierly Grange, the gentleman from whose hands, fifteen years since, I received my adopted child, Fanny!"

"From his hands!" muttered Clement, with a foreboding which, fortunately, was not destined to be realized.

Mr. Foster eyed the baronet attentively, but his features remained impassible. Although the wary lawyer prided himself on his skill as a physiognomist, he could read nothing there. Deliberately he removed his glasses and wiped them carefully, whilst considering a reply.

"Rather singular," he observed, "that a gentleman of Sir John's rank should have been concerned in such a—pardon the word—very questionable transaction!"

"Friendship, sir—self-sacrifice, and all that sort of thing—which no one, I feel assured, can appreciate better than yourself!"

The man of law gave a dry, dissatisfied cough—a compliment invariably put him on his guard.

"I did it," continued the speaker, "to oblige my very near relative and friend, the late Sir Richard Trevanian!"

At the name of Sir Richard the countenance of the lawyer cleared: he fancied that he had at last obtained a clue to the affair, which, somehow or other, he connected with Edward's will.

"And may I ask," he demanded, "where you took the young lady from?"

"Certainly," was the reply; "a very humble cottage in Farnsfield, on the borders of Nottinghamshire. She had been left in the charge of a mere girl, during the absence of the inmates, who had gone to a wedding. I brought the child to London," he added, "and delivered her, as directed, into the hands of this lady; and now, gentlemen, you are in possession of all the information which it is in my power to afford!"

"Have you no idea of your cousin, Sir Richard's, motives," demanded Clement,

"for the abduction of a mere infant?"

"Not the slightest!"

"And you will repeat this statement, if necessary, upon oath?"

"In any court in Christendom!" replied the baronet; "although the figure I shall cut there will not be a most agreeable one! I have frequently regretted my weakness in lending myself to the affair; but it is never too late to atone! I accept the humiliation of my position as my punishment!"

We need not inform our readers that this statement of Sir John Mordaunt was not the most ingenuous—but it was prudent. From many circumstances, he knew that Sir Richard Trevanian had employed Peter Quin to carry off Fanny: it would have been dangerous to acknowledge that he had ever been in the confidence of the agent, as, the chain of connection once established between them, there is no knowing where the inquiries might have terminated.

Fanny was sent for, and in her presence the statement was repeated. At sight of the father of Clement, she turned very pale. She remembered the painful scene which had so lately taken place between them.

To her astonishment and the delight of the lover, the old man advanced towards her the instant she entered the room, and, taking her by the hand, kissed her affectionately on the cheek; he then placed her hand with a significant smile in that of his son.

"Am I forgiven?" he whispered.

The tears which trembled in the eyes of the fair girl and the warm, sunny smile which chased them, assured him that his future daughter-in-law would never recollect that a momentary feeling of unkindness had existed between them. The sombre looks of her adopted parent touched the heart of Fanny: quitting the side of her lover, she threw her arms around her, and as her head rested upon her bosom, assured her in the most endearing terms that whoever might be her parents, she must always retain the first place in her gratitude and affection.

Our fair readers will doubtless suspect that she made a mental reservation in favor of Clement.

"Well," said the lawyer, "am I to consider myself as the legal adviser in this affair?"

Every one present assured him that it could not be placed in better hands.

"In that case," resumed the old man, "I must enjoin strict silence upon all! Not a hint of what has transpired must escape! We have evidently no common enemy to deal with! Sir Richard is dead—that certainly is a circumstance in our favor!"

Sir John Mordaunt considered it as decidedly a very favorable one.

"In a week's time I shall doubtless be prepared to prove who are the real parents of Fanny!" said Mr. Foster. "I am about to hold a consultation," he added, "with one of our most eminent lawyers, respecting the murder of the son of General Maitland. I shall take his opinion on the case!"

At the allusion to the death of George Maitland, the lynx-eyed speaker fancied that a very faint flush appeared upon the brow of the baronet. His suspicion—if indeed he had time to form any—was dissipated as quickly by the coolness with which Sir John requested to be favored with the particulars of that melancholy affair.

"Not now—not now!" interrupted Martha, nervously; "the subject to me is a most painful one!"

The gentleman bowed with an air intended to convey his surprise that the murder of George Maitland should prove so agitating to Miss Mendez.

"Her grandfather was connected with it!" whispered Mr. Foster, by way of explanation; "the body was concealed in the vault of a house belonging to him in Westminster!"

The baronet shrugged his shoulders, as if in pity for her connection with such a man.

"Do you know I sometimes think she could furnish a clue to the perpetrator!"

"Indeed! Did you ever question her upon the subject?"

"Frequently," replied the lawyer, in a confidential tone; "but all in vain. "No matter!" he added; "I shall lay my hand on him yet!"

As he spoke, he placed his own upon the shoulder of the baronet, whose iron nerves never quailed beneath the shock; he even smiled as he wished Mr. Foster all possible success in his very praiseworthy undertaking.

On his departure, Clement could not avoid observing the effort it cost Miss Mendez to invite her late travelling companion to take up his abode with her.

"Not for the world," replied the baronet, "would I disarrange your quiet household with my bachelor ways and irregularities! I smoke, keep late hours—in short, you would find me a most troublesome inmate, and regret your hospitality to such a *roué!* But, with your permission, I will call daily to assure myself of your health and that of this young lady, whose forgiveness I trust to merit by the sincerity of my repentance!"

Fanny, with her usual sweetness, assured him that it was his already, and, leaning on the arm of her lover, retired from the room.

they had so much to say—so many thoughts to exchange with each other.

The instant that Martha and her old acquaintance were alone, the well-bred manner of Sir John Mordaunt and his easy assurance entirely changed—he became abrupt and gloomy.

"I was a fool," he muttered, "for returning to England—and yet my necessities compelled me! I could not dispose of the Grange whilst I remained abroad!"

"Do you doubt me?" demanded Miss Mendez.

"No!" he answered, abruptly; "for even when a girl, you were truthful! What I fear is the prying perseverance of that infernal lawyer! Would you believe it, he boasted to me—*to me*—that he should succeed in dragging to justice the murderer of young Maitland! Singular confidence—was it not?"

"At least," observed Martha, "it ought to assure you that your share in that fearful crime is unsuspected! I am the only person whose evidence could implicate you—who possesses the proofs of your complicity! For my silence you have my promise!"

"Yes—yes—I can rely on that!" observed the baronet; "but the proofs you speak of?"

"The parentage of Fanny once established, they shall be destroyed!"

"Pshaw! Why should I annoy myself by ideal dangers!" exclaimed the assassin, throwing aside his gloomy impressions by a violent effort; "the conditions, the humiliation you exact are hard—but they shall be endured! In a few weeks I shall be safe!"

"To repent, I trust!" observed Martha.

"Ah! Preaching again!"

CHAPTER LV.

They returned—old, kind, familiar faces—
The friends we loved in youth.
HEIR OF THE SEPT.

MR. FOSTER was a man of his word. At the expiration of the week—during which not even his son had been able to catch sight of him—he made his appearance at the house of Miss Mendez. There was a quiet satisfaction in the old man's manner which convinced those who knew him that his time had neither been idly nor unsuccessfully employed.

"*My dear sir,*" observed Clement, "you *appear fatigued!*"

"Not so young as I was!" replied the lawyer; "travelling is hard work at my years!"

"Travelling?" repeated his friends.

"Yes! I have been four times backwards and forwards to Farnsfield! Pretty village—fine country! Knew it years ago! Should have no objection to retire there myself one of these days!"

Our hero uttered something like a dutiful reproach at his father's not having employed him on the occasion, and spared himself the fatigue of so many journeys.

"Yes, and a pretty business you would have made of it!" observed the old man, "with your wits and thoughts in London! If I am no longer young, I possess, at least, the advantage of carrying mine about me! But then I am not in love—which accounts for it!"

Poor Fanny had to look as if she had not heard the latter part of the gentleman's speech.

"Miss Mendez," continued the speaker, "I fear you will think I have taken a great liberty! I have invited heaven knows how many persons to take up their abode here—assured them in your name of a hearty welcome—nay, have brought two of your guests with me!"

Martha assured him that any friends of his would be perfectly welcome.

"Fact is," continued the gentleman, "I could not get away without them! One of them in particular—a dark-eyed devoted woman—no sooner heard that I was making inquiries touching the interests of our young friend here, than she positively refused to quit sight of me! I overheard her," he added, with a quiet smile, "consulting with a very worthy man—a Dr. Bennet, who is also a magistrate—on the propriety of lodging me in gaol, as a security against my running away!"

We need scarcely inform our readers that the person he alluded to was Therese, the wife of Charles Graham.

"And when may we expect them?" demanded Clement.

"In half an hour," replied his father, "never met with such a decided character in all my experience! Her husband, however, is reasonable enough! To his intercession I owe the permission for this preliminary visit to prepare you for their reception!"

There was a knock at the door.

"There they are!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch; "five minutes sooner than I expected! But women—don't look so serious Miss Mendez—even you must allow that they are sometimes a little impatient! Fanny," he added, addressing our heroine, "prepare to receive one who is nearly—

very nearly—related to you—whose love, whose sorrow for your lost ——"

"My mother!" gasped the poor girl.

"I fear," said the lawyer, in a serious tone, "there is no living being to claim your affection as a parent!"

These few words proved a wonderful relief to poor Martha, who could not reconcile her mind to forego the first place in the heart of her adopted child.

The door of the drawing-room opened, and Therese, followed by her bushand, entered, or rather glided into the room, so rapid were her steps. Time had added to rather than detracted from her beauty. It was the same bright, sunny, happy countenance we introduced our readers to in the first chapter of our tale.

The instant she beheld Fanny, a cry of joy burst from her lips. She threw her arms around her, kissed, laughed, and cried over her by turns.

"How like, Charles!" she exclaimed, in a voice broken by emotion; "I should have known her! You have forgotten me, Fanny," she added, "and yet I have sat by the side of your cradle working for you, praying for you, many a weary night! Had your dear mother lived, how happy would this hour have made her!"

At the allusion to her mother, Fanny could not restrain her tears.

Charles advanced towards her, and, taking her in his arms, tenderly kissed her. Little did the unconscious girl imagine the many bitter pangs her birth had caused him.

"It is only your uncle!" whispered Therese; "this," she continued, turning towards Martha, "is the good, kind lady who has been a second parent to you? I cannot thank you," she added, taking her by the hand; "the affection of this dear child alone can repay you!"

"It has repaid me!" answered Miss Mendez.

It would be useless to attempt describing the joy, the tranquil happiness with which the rest of the evening was passed. Therese related to her niece she sad history of her poor mother—the bitter resentment of the adjutant when he discovered, as he supposed, the mystery of her birth—glancing over as slightly as possible her own sufferings from his unjust suspicions.

"Dr. Bennet will arrive in the morning," she said; "and then he and this gentleman, who is an angel, will explain everything to you!"

"An angel!" repeated Mr. Foster, with a good-humored smile; "that accounts for your desire to cage me!"

"And did Dr. Bennet tell you that?" said Therese, laughing and blushing at the same time; "the traitor!"

"My father?" whispered Fanny, in the ear of her new-found relative, as she bade her good night at a late hour—for it was long before they thought of separating.

"I cannot tell you even his name," replied her aunt; "but one thing is certain—that you need not blush for either of your parents!"

With this assurance, our heroine was obliged to rest content.

The next morning Dr. Bennet and Bet Guyton arrived in town, and took up their residence at the house of Miss Mendez. There was a long and private consultation between the former gentleman and the lawyer, at the end of which, Fanny was requested to visit her friends in St. Martin's Court, and invite Mrs. Watkins and the blind old adjutant to pass the evening in Harley Street.

No sooner did the stately old actress and her lodger enter the elegant drawing-room where the party were assembled, than Therese became violently agitated. She recognized in the old man her stern, unrelenting father. Urged by the impulse of her affections, rather than consulting the voice of prudence, she would have thrown herself into his arms—but the old man repelled her.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Do you not know?" exclaimed the agitated woman; "has memory left no trace of me in your heart? You once had a daughter whom you loved, sir—a daughter ——"

"Who dishonored me!" interrupted the adjutant; "who brought shame upon my grey hairs—drove me from my house to linger out the rest of my weary days in the care of strangers! Take me from hence!" he added; "take me from hence! I am aged—very aged, and would not curse you!"

"Down on your knees, old man!" said Dr. Bennet, in a solemn tone, "thank heaven that it has permitted you to atone for years of injustice and cruelty; then ask pardon of this injured angel!"

The father of Therese recognized the voice of the speaker, and trembled violently. For the first time, a suspicion that the daughter whose memory he so tenderly cherished had been the offending child came over him.

"What have I to learn?" he faltered.

"That both of your children are pure as the mother who bore them—that the infant whose existence caused so much mystery and unhappiness was the offspring of your daughter, Fanny—that Therese has been a martyr to her word given to her dead sister!"

The adjutant appeared thunderstruck by the discovery, which his recollections of

his daughter's death-bed appeared to confirm.

"I am punished!" he murmured; "rightly punished! The child I preferred above her sister was the one who deceived me!"

"Deceived, but not dishonored you!" continued the doctor; "for she was the wife of George Maitland, whose mysterious death alone prevented the marriage being recognized! On her death-bed she confided the proofs to me, with a solemn injunction not to make them known till the fate of her husband had been ascertained."

"Therese!" exclaimed her father, extending his arms. "My child—my good, wronged, innocent child—can you forgive my injustice and cruelty?"

His daughter was too much agitated to speak, and remained leaning on the shoulder of her husband for support.

Deeming that he had offended her past atonement, the old man would have bent the knee as he continued:

"I am on the verge of the grave, Therese—old and blind! Have compassion on my sorrow and my weakness! Let me not die at enmity with the only being Providence has spared me—at your feet!"

"Father!" almost shrieked Therese, struggling with her emotion; "not at my feet; your child—your fond, happy child—is at yours!"

"There was not a dry eye in the room as the blind old man laid his hand upon her head and blessed her, imploring heaven, at the same time, to pardon the injustice of which his heart had so long been guilty.

"I can die now," he murmured, "happy—happy! My daughter, pure and innocent, is restored to me! I have nothing more to do with life!"

Clement led Fanny towards her grandfather.

"Pardon me, sir!" he said; "but here is one who claims a share in your affection—the orphan whom it seems you loved in childhood—for the voice of nature spoke within you!"

"Fanny's child! She—I——Oh, this is too much happiness!" exclaimed the adjutant, as he folded the fair girl fondly to his heart. "I have nothing left to ask!"

Both to Martha and the lawyer the announcement that our heroine was the daughter of George Maitland, was indeed a surprise: to the former a most painful one. General Maitland was still living, eager to discover and bring to punishment the assassins of his son, one of whom had been Peter Quin.

"They will take her from me!" she thought—and a sinking sensation came over her. "My age will be as lonely as my youth!"

Mr. Foster began to consider how far *the discovery might* affect the happiness of his son—for the general was a man of high family as well as military rank. It was not without a considerable degree of mortification that he reflected on the probable consequences.

Had they known the heart of our heroine, both he and Martha might have spared themselves the pang occasioned by the doubt.

"Rejoice with me, my second parent!" whispered Fanny to the desolate woman. "I have discovered friends who must be deservedly very dear to me!"

"And I have lost my child—the only being whose love taught me that my heart was human!" sobbed Martha.

The grateful girl tried by her assurances and caresses to soothe the grief of her adopted parent.

"I did not think," she said, "that you would suspect me of ingratitude! Can I forget your care of my infancy—your affection and devotion? Never! Had my real mother been still living," she added, in a tone of deep feeling, the vouchee of her sincerity, "you would have shared my love and duty with her!"

"I—the descendant of the man who shed the blood of George Maitland!" exclaimed Miss Mendez.

"The friend, the protectress of his child!" whispered Fanny, throwing her arms around her. "Never—never again let this fearful subject be alluded to between us! I remember the stern old man—his tyranny and brutality! He was the terror of my childhood, as well as of your maturer years! We are both his victims, and must sympathise with and love each other!"

"Well," mentally ejaculated Mrs. Watkins, "if I cannot make an actress of her, I will teach her how to wear her hoop at court! At any rate, she will not be thrown away at the opera!"

And the old lady found some consolation for her disappointment in that reflection. She had always looked upon the lyric stage with jealousy and dislike. It had injured what she considered the only legitimate branch of the profession.

"I must see General Maitland at once!" observed Mr. Foster. "He has a right to be informed of this discovery!"

"She is my grandchild!" exclaimed the adjutant. "The general may be richer than I am—have wealth in his power to bestow—but he cannot love her so well!"

"And my neice!" added Therese. "Her dear mother left her to my protection, as Dr. Bennet can witness!"

Poor Martha had nothing but her affection to plead, and remained silent, but Fanny felt that her claim was stronger than any.

"In all probability," observed the lawyer, "the object of your affection will not require the wealth of either General Maitland or any of his relatives! The will of Edward Trevanian has been recovered!"

To the astonishment of every one present he proceeded to relate the circumstance of his having been summoned to Farnsfield by her father's friend on the very day of his coming of age—of the wills executed in his presence—the loss of two, and the discovery of the third.

"This," exclaimed our hero, "explains the villany of Walter Trevanian, and his infamous accusation against the faithful servant of Colonel Harrington! Oh, Fanny," he added, turning to the blushing girl, "should it prove as my father suspects!"

"What then?" whispered Fanny.

"The world will deem that my love has been mercenary!"

"Not so!" said Miss Mendez, who was standing near them; "the richest in the land might bestow his daughter upon my heir—for such, Clement, you will become when the husband of my adopted child!"

CHAPTER LVI.

He has as many wiles as a serpent—
Tricks as a monkey. Passion cannot stir,
Or pity move him. I mistrust that man.
CREON.

THE following day, Sir Walter Trevanian received a letter from Mr. Foster, informing him of the discovery of his brother's will, and requesting his presence at the reading of it in his chambers in the Temple.

"Outwitted, after all!" observed Marshall, to whom he handed the communication; "that rascal Duncan was too sharp for us! Have you any idea where the fellow is? His silence might be purchased!"

"It is of little consequence," answered the baronet, coolly, "and not worth the money it would cost! Doubtless the fellow has his price, but I am not inclined to pay it; besides, he hates me!"

"Where is he?"

"Peapod purchased his discharge, and has taken him, I believe, into his service!"

"Upon my honor, Trevanian," said his confidant, "you bear up bravely! I must congratulate you on your philosophy! To be sure, you have the advantage of the colonel! You retain your title—he has lost his! Peapod is remorseless in his revenge—addressing his uncle, as if by mistake, as 'my lord!' I shall never forget the scene at the Clarendon! Surely that triumph might have satisfied him! What do you intend to do?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing!" repeated Marshall, with surprise; "and this will——"

"Is absolutely so much waste paper—and the extraordinary part of the affair is, that my father must have known it!"

"Your father was a shrewd man!" drily observed his companion.

"My dear fellow," continued Walter Trevanian, "there are secrets in all families! Enough to say that, had I been in possession of *facts* which have since come to my knowledge, and which I am in a condition to prove, I should never have troubled myself about Edward's will!"

"But you will attend and hear it read?"

"Certainly!"

"Perhaps he was mad!" added Marshall.

"As sane as you are: there is no disputing it on that score! Repress your curiosity for a short time—for positively it is not my intention to gratify it! My father, with all his cleverness, judged erroneously when he gave the living of Farnsfield, worth heaven knows how much a year, to obtain possession of one will, and fifteen hundred pounds for the second! I would not have parted with as many pence to have secured all three!"

"You are shrewd, Walter—devilish shrewd!" said his friend; "but take care, or you will find yourself outwitted at last!"

The baronet smiled complacently, as if in pity at the prediction of the speaker; and, fully satisfied of his own superior judgment, appeared perfectly assured of the result.

It was agreed that Marshall should accompany him on the appointed day to the chambers of the lawyer.

Great was the surprise of General Maitland when informed by Mr. Foster of the long-concealed marriage of his son, and the existence of a grand-daughter. Although neither a very enthusiastic nor impressionable person, he was a man of honor, and resolved at once upon acknowledging her. As for her remaining under the roof of Martha Mendez, he would not hear of such an arrangement for a single day.

The decision was not an unnatural one, however calculated it might prove to wound the feelings both of Fanny and her protectress.

"No—no!" he said; "the child of my murdered boy must break all ties with the descendant of Peter Quin! She may be a very estimable person, as you say! I shall at once remove her to the house of my sister, Lady Peters!"

"You forget, general," observed Mr. Foster, "that Fanny has another grandfather, whose claim upon her duty and obedience equals your own!"

"I presume you allude," replied the soldier, haughtily, "to the father of the young person whom my son was imprudent enough to marry!"

"And who, by profession as well as birth, is a gentleman!" said the lawyer, not overpleased at the peremptory tone of the speaker; "he has served in the army!"

"Glad to hear it! His name?"

"Moore!"

"His rank?"

"Lieutenant and adjutant!"

"My old subaltern!" exclaimed the general; "a very worthy man, and, as you say, a gentleman—made an imprudent marriage with a girl without a shilling! *Still he is a gentleman*—and poor George's choice was not so very reprehensible, after all! We shall speedily understand each other! Were my poor boy living, I should forgive him—for birth with me is a great consideration!"

Mr. Foster noticed the extreme complacency with which the old soldier dwelt on the fact of his—the blind old adjutant—being a gentleman, and his avowed prejudice in favor of birth; and the idea struck him that he had been devoting his energies to insure the misery, perhaps, instead of the happiness, of Clement.

"Perhaps," he said, "I had better see Miss Maitland first, and prepare her for your visit!"

The old gentleman reflected for an instant: he had an important engagement at the Horse Guards which it would be inconvenient to put off, and the delay would give him time to see his sister. As his feelings were too well regulated to be very deeply interested, he at once assented.

"You are right!" he said. "Tell her I will call this evening, and inform her of the arrangement with her aunt, Lady Peters!"

After making a memorandum of the hour at which the will was to be read, the general took his leave, and the lawyer started for the residence of Miss Mendez, who regarded him with almost childish helplessness when he announced to her the visit of Fanny's grandfather.

"I shall not leave you!" said our heroine, in a decided tone. General Maitland is not the only relative who possesses a claim on my obedience!"

"He may apply to the Chancellor," observed Martha, "whose authority we cannot dispute!"

"Of course not, but it is very easily *evaded!*"

Both the ladies eagerly demanded by what means.

"By placing Fanny at once under the guardianship of the adjutant, whose claim is equally near as the general's!"

The lawyer was a man of great resources, and money in London can work wonders. In less than three hours a ready furnished house within a few doors of Harley Street was taken, and the adjutant, with his daughter and her husband, were duly installed there.

When the general made his promised visit, he was informed by the footman that Miss Maitland had removed to the residence of her grandfather. On his calling there, neither Therese nor her father would hear of Fanny's quitting them; and as there was nothing which the most fastidious person could object to in the arrangement, the old soldier was compelled to submit.

"His recognition of his grand-daughter was cold and stately. Poor Fanny felt her heart sink within her as she mentally contrasted his manner with the warm affection of the relatives on her mother's side.

"I must always reverence and respect General Maitland!" she observed, after he had taken his leave; "but I feel that I can never love him as I do my poor blind grandfather!"

Sir Walter Trevanian and his friend Marshall arrived at the chambers in the Temple at the appointed time. Both were surprised at the presence of the general, who, at the request of the lawyer, had consented to be present.

After narrating the circumstances of the will—its loss and recovery—Mr. Foster proceeded to read it.

By it the testator bequeathed the Trevanian estates, on the death of his father, to his dear and valued friend George Maitland—to him and to his heirs. There was a provision for his faithful servant, Duncan, in the shape of an annuity for his life, and a charge upon the property to the amount of twenty thousand pounds, to be divided between his half-brother and sister.

To the astonishment of all present, the baronet listened to the reading of the testament—which to all appearance beggared him—with the most profound indifference; more than once a satirical smile curled the corners of his lips.

"Nothing more than I expected!" he observed, at last, but without the least appearance of anger or disappointment; "Edward always hated me!"

"Perhaps," said the lawyer, "the feeling was mutual?"

"Although your assumption is most gratuitous," replied the young man, haughtily,

"it is not without truth! I detested him!"

The general looked shocked—not at the sentiment so much as the bad taste of the avowal.

"May I ask if Sir Walter Trevanian has any objection to offer to the validity of his brother's will?" inquired Mr. Foster.

"That is a question for his lawyer to decide!" said Marshall.

"Pooh!" interrupted his friend; "it is hardly worth while to dispute it! Pity," he added, "that George Maitland died without an heir!"

"There you are mistaken, sir!" exclaimed the general. "My son, unknown to his family, had contracted marriage with the daughter of a former officer in my regiment, from which union a daughter was born shortly after his assassination!"

Even this discovery did not affect the equanimity of the baronet; but when he heard who that daughter had proved to be, he suddenly became deeply interested. He had not forgotten the fair girl of the Chateau Vert: her preference of our hero had galled him, and he would have given worlds, had he possessed them, to snatch the prize from the man he so bitterly hated.

"I must refer you, gentlemen," he said "to my legal advisers! As a point of duty to the name I bear as well as to myself, I shall defend my rights by every means in my power!"

"Perfectly fair!" observed the grandfather of the heiress.

"Only too happy that my conduct merits the approbation of so honorable a man as General Maitland!" replied Sir Walter, with an air of great respect, at the same time rising to take his leave.

"Cool, but gentlemanly!" muttered the old soldier, as the baronet and his companion left the chambers.

"Can't make him out!" said the lawyer; "he appears more confident and less excited than I expected! If he relies on proving the insanity of Edward Trevanian, he will be disappointed!"

"You think he was sane, then?"

"As you or I, general!" replied Mr. Foster; "he was a young man of singular acquirements, feelings, and temper—but in the perfect possession of his reason!"

The general returned home, deeply pondering on the scene which had taken place. Since he had discovered that his granddaughter was the heiress of the Trevanian property, she had become a very important personage in his estimation, and he began to meditate the most brilliant prospects for her.

During the day he received a visit from Sir Walter, who came, as he said, to propose an arrangement which would prevent all litigation on the subject of the will: it was neither more nor less than the offer of his hand to Fanny.

The general at once accepted it.

"You are right!" he said; "quite right; it will prevent all litigation! The name of Trevanian is an honorable as well as ancient one—came in at the Conquest, with the Maitlands! Nothing can be better!"

"And yet I am half afraid," observed his visitor, "that your granddaughter may prefer that of Foster!"

"Impossible, sir!" interrupted the general, coloring to the temples with anger at such a supposition; "without my consent she would never presume to encourage the addresses of any man—and least of all, the son of a mere lawyer!"

When the baronet took his leave he quitted the old man perfectly alive to the danger of a *mesalliance*, and thoroughly determined to take the necessary steps to prevent it.

That very hour he drove to the residence of Fanny, and, after congratulating her on the brilliant inheritance she had succeeded—or rather was about to succeed—to, he concluded by coolly informing her that he had received an offer for her hand, and had accepted it.

"Without consulting me?" exclaimed the astonished girl, with the most artless *naïveté*.

The gentleman replied, "that in the sphere in which she was henceforth to move, such a proceeding was unusual."

"But I have another grandfather?" urged Fanny.

"True—your mother's father—the adjutant!" remarked the general, not without a certain degree of bitterness that the opinion of any other person should be weighed for an instant against his.

"Who is dear to me—quite as dear to me, sir, as you are!" continued our heroine. "Nay, do not be angry at my truthfulness! I have not yet learned the lesson of deceit! Besides," she added, with a modest blush, "my heart has long been given to another!"

"You must recall it!"

"Never! It is not in my power!"

"Fanny," said the general, in a severe tone, "I have heard of the attempt which has been made by the son of the old lawyer in the Temple to entrap you into an engagement; but he forgot one thing in his calculation—that you were my grand-daughter, and that the law of my country, as well as that of nature, gives me a voice in your disposal! My consent is necessary—and that is already promised to Sir Walter Trevanian!"

"To him!" repeated Fanny, in a tone of calmness which very much surprised her

new-found relative; "you must recall it, then—for I had rather toil or depend on the world's cold charity for bread than share the wealth of princes with that man! My word, grand-father, as well as my affections, are pledged to Captain Foster! I shall keep it!"

CHAPTER LVII.

For as thou urgest justice,
Be assured thou shalt have justice more than
Thou desirest. SHAKSPEARE.

It would be difficult to say whether anger or astonishment predominated in the breast of General Maitland, at the firm refusal of his newly discovered grandchild to listen to the addresses of Sir Walter Trevanian. It was in vain that he pointed out to her the advantages of the match—how it would settle amicably all disputes relative to the property, and place her at once in a brilliant position in society. Fanny only replied to him by a quiet smile, or "You forget, grandfather, that I am engaged to Clement Foster!"

The old soldier could not comprehend such firmness—obstinacy, he called it.—His ideas of hearts were similar to the ones he entertained of recruits—namely, that they were things to be drilled—to be regulated by superior orders—and fell in or out of love at the word of command.

That Fanny must eventually yield to his advice, and become the wife of the baronet, he was firmly convinced—and expressed himself to that effect when Clement Foster, after repeatedly calling upon him, at last contrived to obtain an interview.

"You perceive," he said after explaining his views to our hero, "that the match, Mr. Foster, is perfectly out of the question! Personally, of course, I can have no objection to you—so you must not feel offended; for although your family is not very old, I believe it is perfectly respectable, and De Vere tells me that you honorably distinguished yourself in the peninsula!"

His visitor bowed at the compliment.

"I hate lawyers!" continued the general; "that is," he added, perceiving that the countenance of Clement flushed with anger; "professionals! This marriage—which, I assure you, you may look upon as a settled thing—will spare a vast deal of litigation—give Fanny a position in society which her unfortunate appearance on the stage might render it otherwise difficult for her to attain!"

"But Miss Maitland has refused him?"

"Oh, yes—yes—we understand all about that! Refused him as young ladies generally refuse a title and a husband, the first time they are offered to their acceptance—only to give their friends an opportunity of persuading them to what they secretly desire!"

"And is such really your opinion of your grand-daughter, General Maitland?" demanded our hero.

"It is!"

"Then it is not mine! I feel assured that when Fanny has once given her affections, no solicitations will induce her to recall them! They are mine, sir—so truthfully and devotedly, that, were I in my grave, Walter Trevanian would stand as little chance of becoming her husband as he does now!"

"You think so!" observed the general, with a smile of pity at what he considered the vanity of the speaker.

"I am sure so! He is her aversion! She despises him!"

"Pah! A ridiculous girlish dislike, which will wear off with time—especially when they are married!"

"If I thought there was the slightest chance," exclaimed Clement, "of such an event, I would take effectual means to prevent it!"

"May I ask those means?" demanded the old gentleman, drily.

His visitor remained silent. Angry and excited as he was, he had still sufficient presence of mind not to commit himself by a declaration of any hostile intentions against his rival. General Maitland was a cool, calculating man of the world, apt and determined, and not likely to forego the advantage which such an avowal would place in his hands.

"Pardon me!" said Clement; "but novices only show their cards to their opponents!"

"That depends upon the game they intend to play!" drily observed the grandfather of Fanny. "Come, Mr. Foster, I will be more frank with you than you appear inclined to be with me! It suits my views that Fanny should become the wife of Sir Walter Trevanian! As I said before, it will prevent all litigation respecting the property! She is under age, and I am her natural guardian!"

"You forget, sir, she has other relatives!"

"But none so near as I am!" continued the old soldier; "and I shall at once take proceedings to make her a ward in Chancery! As for the adjutant and the persons who are related to her on the mother's side, of course there can be no objection to her seeing them occasionally; but her residence must be with my sister, Lady Peters, who

is perfectly willing to receive her! Good morning, Captain Foster!"

"Good morning, General Maitland!" replied his disappointed visitor; "I will not plead that the happinesss of your grand-child is at stake! You are above such common-place considerations!"

"Perfectly so!" answered the general, with the most provoking composure.

"When I waited upon you to ask your consent," continued Clement, "I was quite hopeless of obtaining it!"

"You judged very rightly, sir!"

"Still I did so in deference to Fanny's wish and the near tie between you! As I anticipated, I have failed to move you!"

"Utterly!" ejaculated the general,

"I must now rely upon myself!" added the lover; "on the affection and natural good sense of your grand-daughter! *She will never be Lady Trevanian!*"

So saying, the young soldier left the house, and hastened with impatient steps to the residence of the adjutant.

Fanny and Therese were seated in the drawing-room of their new home when Clement Foster made his appearance after his visit to the general. The aunt had been recounting to her neice the sad story of her mother's love and untimely death, glancing as lightly as possible over her own generous devotion and sufferings, from scrupulously adhering to the promise made to her dying sister. Our heroine fully appreciated the delicacy of her newly-discovered relative, and already began to love her

"Weeping!" said our hero, taking her gently by the hand and kissing away her tears. "Oh, Fanny, could the wishes of my heart be realised, sorrow should never approach you—life should appear one golden holiday—a glorious summer's dream!"

"You have seen my grandfather?"

"Yes."

"And met with a refusal?"

"He is cold and selfish!" replied her lover. "I might as well have prayed to an idol as appeal to his feelings! He has none, save those of pride and ambition! He is determined to make you the wife of Walter Trevanian.

The fair girl looked upon his countenance with a modest blush, and gently smiled. No vows, or protestations could have conveyed to him the same blissful assurance as that pure and confiding look. Had the least doubt, or even the shadow of one, lingered in his heart, it must have dissipated it at once and for ever.

"The wife of Walter Trevanian!" repeated Therese, warmly; "of the bold, bad man you were speaking of! Oh, never—never! Of course," she added, addressing Clement, "you told him that Fanny's heart was engaged—that she loved you dearer than any earthly being—that it was the earnest desire both of her grandfather and myself that you—and you alone—should become her husband?"

"Believe me," said her lover, "that I left no theme untouched to bend his resolution—but found it iron! He spoke of his authority, and treated the claims of your mother's family with indifference, if not contempt!"

"I am sorry for it!" quietly observed Fanny.

Her lover looked at her uneasily for an instant, but not doubtfully.

"I would willingly," she added, in a more decided tone, "make any sacrifice short of happiness and self-respect to have obtained his affection; but ——"

"You hesitate!" observed the young soldier, impatiently.

"But not my love!" she continued, in that deep, earnest tone which falls upon the ear when the heart feels the words the lips pronounce; "my early sufferings and trials have taught me firmness and decision! Clement," she added, with touching confidence, "do you think my speech unmaidenly! But claim me when you will, my lips shall ratify the vows which make me yours!"

The lover in an instant was at her feet, pouring forth incoherent expressions of gratitude and devotion.

Therese, remembering the days of her own trials and courtship, like a kind, considerate aunt, rose from her seat and silently left the room

When the adjutant and Miss Mendez were informed of the conduct of General Maitland, they highly approved of our heroine's resolution. The latter, fearful lest her project of a marriage between her adopted child and Clement should be prevented, urged an immediate union. She trembled lest, by being placed under her paternal grandfather's guardianship, he should separate them.

That same evening the lawyer and Dr. Bennet were consulted on the subject.

"Do nothing hastily!" said Mr. Foster. "Wait the result of the trial!"

"You forget, my dear sir," interrupted his son, "that Fanny is a minor?"

"I seldom forget any legal point!" drily answered his father.

"But should the general refuse to authorise proceedings?"

The executors of Edward Trevanian's will—of which I am one, and the adjutant—can proceed without him! I stake my legal reputation on the result. General Mait-

land," he added, "will neither have the power nor the inclination to interfere to prevent your happiness!"

It was a rare circumstance for Mr. Foster to express so decided an opinion. His long experience in the turnings and subtleties of the law made him chary, and Clement felt that he must have very strong grounds for arriving at so positive a conclusion.

He was obliged to express himself satisfied, although, as our readers doubtless suspect, he would much rather have ended his fears of losing Fanny by an immediate marriage.

The fact was, the old gentleman had held several long and private interviews with Dr. Bennet and Bet Guyton, who had put him in possession of certain facts which threw a new light upon the will of Edward Trevanian. He now perfectly agreed with the baronet, that it was so much waste paper—perfectly invalid as far as any rights the testator ever possessed to the Trevanian property.

But we must not anticipate events.

When our hero heard him express this opinion, far from feeling disappointed, it was a source of real happiness to him. His love appeared the more disinterested.

"Fanny—dear Fanny!" he exclaimed, "should my father's surmise prove true—and I can scarcely doubt it—I cannot tell you how inexpressibly happy it will make me! I never desired this wealth—it gave you no additional charms in my eyes; on the contrary, it pained me, by rendering the distance between us still greater! I am not rich, but possess enough for content, which needs but little! Say, will you not at once resign this fatal fortune?"

"Willingly!" replied the fair girl; "the only value it ever possessed in my mind was the thought that it might render me more worthy of you!"

"Very heroic! very romantic, indeed!" exclaimed the lawyer, with a good-humored smile; "but, unfortunately for Sir Walter Trevanian, you have no power to make the sacrifice without the consent of your guardians—which I venture to predict you will never obtain!"

The lovers regarded each other with a look of disappointment.

"I can appreciate your delicacy," continued the old man; "but were the object of it as worthy of it, as, on the contrary, he has proved himself unworthy, it could not be. You have neither the moral nor the legal right to reject this inheritance—or rather the portion of it," he added, "which falls to your share!"

"Certainly not!" said Dr. Bennet.

"But if the will is worthless?" timidly observed Therese, to whose simple, straightforward mind the opinions she had just heard appeared a paradox.

"And it is worthless!" exclaimed both the gentlemen.

"But who is to prove it?"

"The baronet himself, who alone possesses the means!" replied Mr. Foster; "and now question me no more! Wait patiently for the trial, which, if I err not, will be one of the most singular as well as interesting which has been heard in the courts since the celebrated Kingston case!"

"I really cannot comprehend it!" observed Clement, not regarding his father's request that no further questions should be asked.

"And yet you had once a very pretty notion—considering your age—of law!" answered the old gentleman, with a sigh; "but campaigning and love, I suppose, have driven them out of your head!"

"You say that Walter Trevanian can upset the will?"

"Easily!"

"Then why contest it?"

The question appeared so very natural, that every one present listened anxiously for the reply.

"*We wish him to do so!*" said the lawyer.

"Would it not be more generous," timidly suggested Fanny, "at once to resign all claim—which, however grateful I may feel for the testator's friendship to my poor father, I can scarcely consider a just one!"

"Reasoned like yourself!" exclaimed Dr. Bennet, with a look of admiration. "The gifts of fortune, I perceive, will never corrupt your heart; they can only add to your virtues, by affording you a more extended sphere for exercising them!"

Taking both her hands in his, he added: "Be satisfied with the prudence as well as the honorable intentions of those who, however enigmatical their conduct may now appear, have only your welfare and the ends of integrity in view! You cannot doubt the oldest friend of your poor mother or the parent of Clement Foster!"

After such an appeal it was impossible to pursue the subject further.

Martha had heard all that passed with secret satisfaction. It was a consolation to the affectionate woman that her young favorites should owe their future wealth to her and not to Edward Trevanian.

"My father and Dr. Bennet," observed our hero to Fanny, "doubtless wish to be legally and honorably disburthened of the duties they have undertaken: their scruples are those of delicate minds, and we must submit!"

Between our readers and ourselves, there was far more disappointment than resigna-

tick in the tone in which the words were uttered.

The great cause of Maitland *versus* Trevanian was consequently allowed to proceed.

CHAPTER LVIII.

> Man's crimes are his worst enemies, following
> Like shadows, till they drive his steps into
> The pit he dug. CRMON.

THE day of trial at last arrived, and the court, as is usual when any event of importance—to use a sporting, though not a legal phrase—is expected to come off, was crowded with the idle and the curious, eager for excitement—curious to witness the display of eloquence and learning which was certain to take place—for the most eminent counsel had been retained on either side. Seats had been reserved for the friends and witnesses both of plaintiff and defendant. On the bench were Sir John Mordaunt and General Maitland. The latter, although he had done everything in his power to prevent the affair being brought to an issue, had still a sufficient sense of what was due to himself and the daughter of his murdered son to appear on the occasion of the trial. He scarcely condescended to notice the blind old adjutant and Therese, as they took their seats beside him. As for Clement Foster, he appeared perfectly to ignore his existence. Dr. Bennet and the lawyer remained by the counsel who was to plead the cause of the orphan.

Directly opposite to them were the baronet and Serjeant Bilkings, a gentleman who, in addition to his legal attainments, possessed a tongue resembling a file—it scarified wherever it touched.

His opponent was a barrister named Allen—a clearheaded, eloquent man, who had formerly been an actor, and, under the name of Arlan, strutted and fretted his hour upon the stage. Finding the law more profitable, he had abandoned the drama for the bar, where he rose at last to the dignity of the coif.

There was a general "Hush!" followed by a cessation of voices, as he rose to address the learned judge. With as much brevity as was consistent with the opportunity for forensic display which few barristers let slip, he proceeded to state the extraordinary friendship which existed between the late Edward Trevanian and the father of the claimant—described the execution of the will on the day of his coming of age, and his death—the marriage of George Maitland, and his untimely end.

Whilst he was speaking, not a sound except that of his deep, sonorous voice was heard in the crowded court: the spectator imagined that he had listened to some tale of romance of the middle ages, rather than the narration of events which had taken place in their own time, many of the actors in which were living yet.

When the learned gentleman paused an instant, the opposing counsel rose to address the court.

"Not yet, brother Bilkings!" observed the judge; "Mr. Allen has not concluded the opening of his case!"

"It is to spare your lordship's valuable time, and the breath of Mr. Allen! We do not intend to dispute the fact of the will having been executed by the late Edward Trevanian, on the very day and in the manner so eloquently described!"

The jury, as well as every one present, were surprised, Clement Foster fancied that he detected a sly smile lurking round the corner of his father's mouth: if so, it quickly disappeared, and his features became impassible as before.

"We accept the admission!" resumed Mr. Allen; "doubtless the learned serjeant relies upon the difficulty of proving the marriage of the late George Maitland, and the birth of his heiress! If so, we are prepared with our witnesses!"

His opponent remained silent.

The Rev. Jabez Knowles was called, who produced a special licence, by virtue of which he had privately celebrated the union between the daughter of the adjutant and his former pupil—the witnesses being Edward Trevanian and his servant, Duncan. Dr. Bennet proved the birth of our heroine; Therese and her husband her abduction from the village of Farnsfield.

"All this we do not dispute!" observed Serjeant Bilkings, rising for the second time to address the court; "still we do not perceive by what chain of evidence the identity of the infant so stolen with the plaintiff in the present cause is to be proved!"

The next witness, Sir John Mordaunt, was then called, and his examination commenced.

"Were you related to the late Sir Richard Trevanian?"

"His cousin!"

"Were you on friendly terms with him?"

"Occasionally! More than once he required my services!"

"Did you ever, at his solicitation, carry off a child?"

"I did!"

"From what place?"

"A cottage in a village named Farnsfield. Sir Richard informed me that the honor of his family required the removal of the in-

fant: won by his earnest solicitations and appeals to my friendship, I consented—secured the infant during the absence of the inmates of the house; who were gone, as I understood, to be married—and conveyed it to London! An act," added the witness, with well-acted contrition, "which I now bitterly regret, and accept the present exposure of my weakness as its fitting punishment!"

"What became of the child?" demanded Mr. Allen.

"I consigned it, as I was instructed, to the care of a female named Martha Quin, residing in the neighborhood of the Almonry, in Westminster. Shortly afterwards I quitted England, and lost sight of her!"

Whilst giving his evidence, Sir John Mordaunt appeared very pale, but calm and collected. So favorable was the impression his manner produced, that many sympathised with the shame and humiliation he must have endured.

"Silence—silence!" cried the ushers.

This was caused by an exclamation of mingled surprise and rage which escaped from a coarse-looking female, shabbily dressed, who stood in the body of the court, amid the crowd of spectators.

She was speedily removed, and tranquillity restored. The baronet appeared to be the only person seriously annoyed by the interruption. His countenance became flushed, as the woman, raising her arm above the level of the heads of those who were standing around her, shook her clenched hand at him.

Serjeant Bilkings rose, when Sir Walter whispered a few words in his ear.

"I decline cross-examining the witness!" he said, as he resumed his seat.

In abstaining from a course which could only have led to the gratification of his spleen, his client acted prudently. He was the next heir of Sir John Mordaunt, in the event of his dying without male issue, and he had no wish to provoke his animosity.

The wretched man instantly left the court, and that same hour started for Dover. In the female whose outrageous conduct had called for the interference of the ushers, he had recognised the wife of his old companion in crime, Miles. She evidently knew him, and till seas were placed between them he felt that his life was in danger.

He never more revisited England, but died shortly afterwards in Italy where he had buried himself in the deepest retirement.

When Martha Mendez appeared in the witness-box, all present were struck by the *death-like pallor of her* countenance—yet *she gave her evidence* firmly: it fully established the identity of her adopted child.

The only question asked on her cross-examination was, if she was not the granddaughter of Peter Quin, the murderer of George Maitland.

"I am!" was the reply. "My wretched grandfather, who would have sold his future hopes for his idol, gold, was bribed to commit—or, at least, to direct—the horrid act!"

"By whom?" demanded the serjeant, with a triumphant smile.

"The late Sir Richard Trevanian."

No further question was put, and Martha, bowed with humiliation and shame, resumed her seat.

Neither the judge nor the jury could comprehend the line of defence to claims so clearly proved—so frankly admitted. Great, therefore, was the excitement of all present when the counsel for Sir Walter rose to reply.

"The extraordinary assertion we have just heard," he said, "affecting the honor of a nobleman so justly respected as the late father of my client, must be refuted at another time! We admit the will of the elder brother of Sir Walter—the identity of the plaintiff; but, unfortunately for her case, the present possessor claims the property not as the heir of his predecessor, but of his uncle—the elder brother of Sir Richard Trevanian—who, having contracted a private marriage with a girl of humble origin, named Mary Beacham, shortly before his death left the estates to any issue he might have by her, male or female. Both died without leaving any such issue; and the late baronet, anxious to conceal the stain upon the family escutcheon, never thought fit to produce the will, although he religiously preserved it, together with the proofs of the marriage."

The will and documents alluded to by the learned counsel were handed to the judge, who carefully perused them.

"My lord," said Mr. Allen, "I move that those papers are impounded by the court!"

There was a general expression of surprise.

"Do you impugn their authenticity?" demanded the serjeant.

"I will imitate the courtesy of my learned friend," replied his opponent, "and at once admit that they are genuine!"

"Thus," continued the counsel for the defendant, "your lordship will perceive that Sir Walter claims the estates as heir of his uncle, Sir Frederick Trevanian!"

"And my client," replied Mr. Allen, "claims them as one of the co-heiresses of the *grand-daughter* of Sir Frederick

Trevanian, whose lady, as we are prepared by witnesses to prove, left a daughter, which daughter married Lieutenant Moore!"

Bet Guyton, who attended the rustic wife of Sir Richard's elder brother, who died in her confinement, proved the birth of a female child, who had been brought up by one of her mother's relatives, but without the slightest suspicion of her being legitimate. The sapphire ring which had so excited the curiosity of Dr. Bennet—the wedding gift of her weak but not cruel husband—she had promised to return to him: his death alone prevented the fulfilment of her promise.

"You have lost your cause!" whispered Serjeant Bilkings to his client, who, mute with rage and astonishment, sat like a statue by his side.

With an imprecation so audibly pronounced that it reached the ear of the judge, who good-naturedly made an allowance for his excitement, Sir Walter left the court.

Our tale is so near its conclusion that it would be tiring the patience of our readers to enter into a detail of the second trial, which the obstinacy of the baronet rendered necessary. Enough to state, it terminated in the triumph of Fanny and her aunt Therese, who were declared co-heiresses, in right of their mother, to the Trevanian estates. The blind old soldier thus became entitled to the guardianship of our heroine, and General Maitland, although with an ill-grace, consented to her marriage with Clement. As Therese had no children, it was settled that she and her husband should receive a yearly income from the property, which was thus secured to our heroine and her heirs. At her earnest entreaty, Miss Mendez purchased a property and resided near her. Miss Wyndham was pensioned off. The subject of George Maitland's death was never alluded to between the now happy woman and her adopted child.

On the evening of the day of the second trial, which reduced Sir Walter Trevanian to poverty, he appeared for the last time at the mess of his regiment. It was unnecessary to ask the result: his brother officers read in his haggard looks and scowling glances that it had been unfavorable.

"Take your wine, Walter!" whispered, Marshall; "hang it, man—don't show the white feather!"

"Curse the wine!" muttered the baronet, furiously.

"Must sell out!" mentally observed his friend; "soon be rid of him!"

And with this reflection, he addressed his conversation to his neighbor at the table.

"*Come!*" *said the colonel*, who had his private reasons for provoking the disappointed man to speak out; "hang care! Wine, Sir Walter!"

His subaltern bowed, and tossed off a glass of champagne.

"I have been plundered, gentlemen," he said, "of the inheritance of my ancestors—am the victim of a vile conspiracy! Thank heaven, I know the prime mover in the infamous transaction! He shall not escape me!"

This was followed by a look directed to Lord Peapod, who remained perfectly unmoved.

"Shoot the fellow!" exclaimed two or three of the officers present.

"Horsewhip the rascal!" added another.

"That I cannot do!" replied the baronet; "for he disgraces our uniform!"

"What!" said the major; "in the army?"

"Of our own regiment!" chimed in the colonel, with well affected surprise; "impossible!"

"A mean-spirited ruffian," continued Sir Walter, "who ought never to have been admitted amongst us! But the service is not what it used to be! The man I allude to ought to have remained a clerk in the office of his old villain of a father—scheming and chicanery are his natural elements!"

At this pointed allusion to our hero, Lord Peapod bit his lips; still by a violent effort he controlled his indignation—for he really pitied the madness of the man, much as he despised him.

"Name him?" exclaimed several.

"Clement Foster!"

At the name of his friend, his lordship, usually so calm and self-possessed, lost all self-command.

"Am I to understand that you speak of Captain Foster?" he said.

"Of him, and none but him!"

"And you accuse him of acting dishonestly?"

"Like a felon!"

Lord Peapod could endure no more—it seemed a treason against friendship as well as gratitude.

"You compel me, Sir, to give you the lie to your teeth!" he exclaimed; "the man you slander is the soul of truth and honor! You first plundered him at play—plundered is the word—then attempted to induce him to commit an act unworthy of a soldier and a gentleman! None but a coward," he added, "would slander the absent!"

After such an insult, all hope of reconciliation was useless. Colonel Barratt, the only person whose rank in the regiment could have given weight to any remonstrance, remained impassible—Walter Trevanian was an excellent shot, and he was his nephew's heir.

They met the following morning in the riding-school, and at the first fire the baronet fell—the bullet of his antagonist had reached his heart. The name of Trevanian became extinct.

In those days duelling was not regarded by the legislature in the serious light it is at the present time, especially amongst military men.

There was a trial and a nominal fine. His lordship soon afterwards sold out of the army, and traveled on the continent.

Great was the surprise and consternation amongst the gossips of Farnsfield, when the account of the late proceedings reached the village. The lawyer's daughters felt terribly mortified at the idea of the old adjutant's grand-daughter becoming the lady of the manor.

"Who could have thought it?" exclaimed one.

"Who imagined?" added a second.

"Therese, too! Of course her husband will leave off teaching!"

Such were the ejaculations of the former enemies of the two innocent girls, whom they had misjudged so harshly; but the deepest regret was experienced by Mrs. Franklin, who never ceased to reproach herself for having caused the misery of her son, whom she had worried at last into a marriage with one of the lawyer's daughters. But for her gossipping propensities and love of slander, she felt assured that he might have been the husband of Therese—one of the heiresses of the Trevanian estate—and the conviction was her bitterest punishment.

It was a lovely evening when Captain Foster and his bride reached the village of Farnsfield. Its inhabitants, together with the numerous tenantry, were assembled to welcome them. Never was reception more enthusiastic. Poor Therese, who followed with her husband and Miss Mendez, in a covered carriage, smiled through her tears as she recognised each familiar face; her forgiving heart had no enmities to resent—she had kind recollections for all.

Great was the enthusiasm for the heiress and her husband, who made themselves popular by their affability to all.

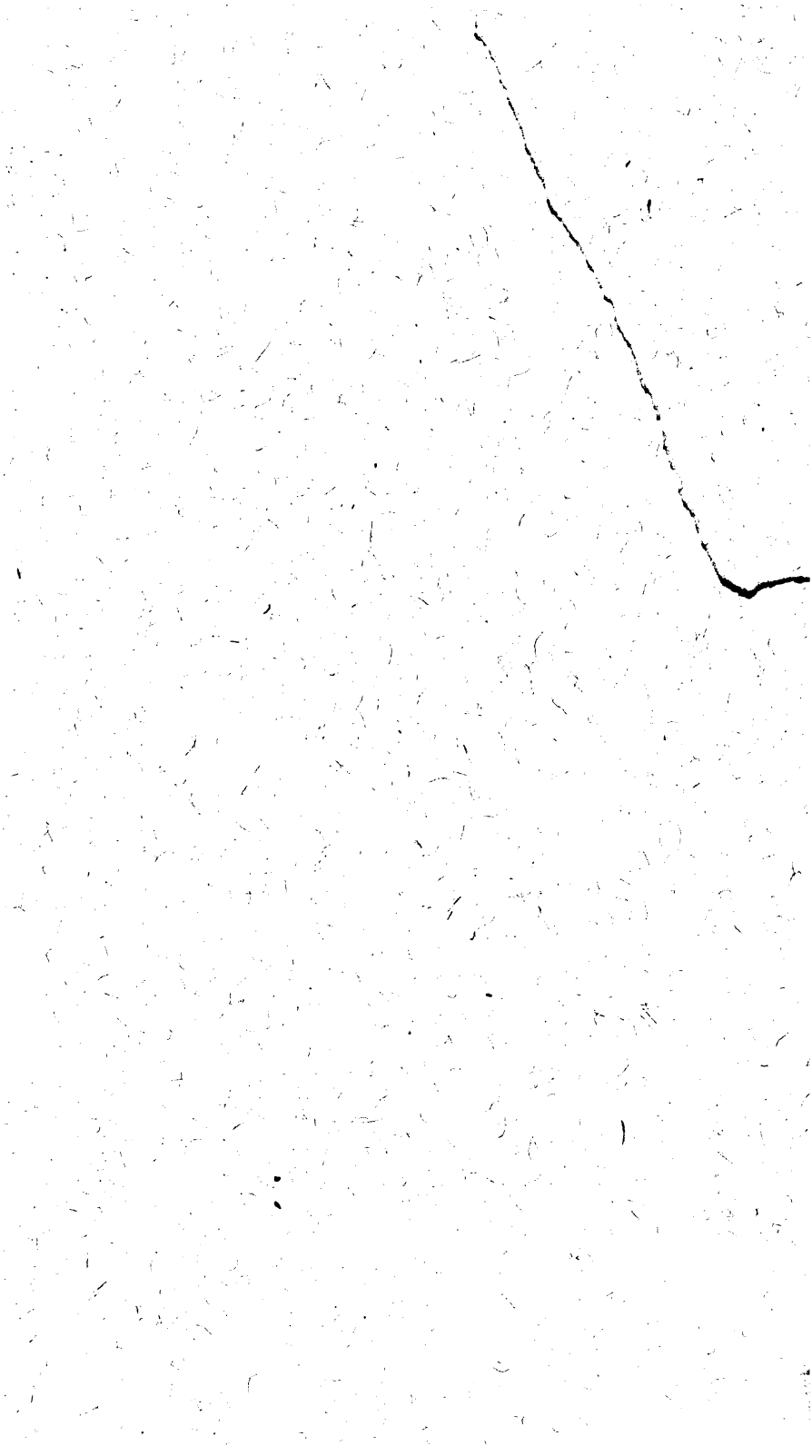
Mr. Foster, after prosecuting his dishonest clerk, who was convicted, retired from the profession, and purchased an estate near Southwell, where the blind old soldier resided with him. For several years there were rumors among the gentry in the neighborhood of a project of marriage between him and Martha; but it ended as it commenced—in the imaginations of those who circulated it.

But Fanny's happiness was not complete till Mr. and Mrs. Barry returned to England. The first portraits painted by the talented artist were those of our heroine and Clement.

The remains of Mrs. George Maitland and Mary Beacham—or rather Lady Trevanian—were removed from their humble resting-place to the stately mausoleum in the churchyard. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Old Mike, the sexton, shook his head with his usual knowing look, and observed to his assistant—for he was now so old that he required one:

"I always said that she was not buried in her proper place—but the error is repaired at last! God in His own good time works all things to the end His wisdom has appointed!"

THE END.



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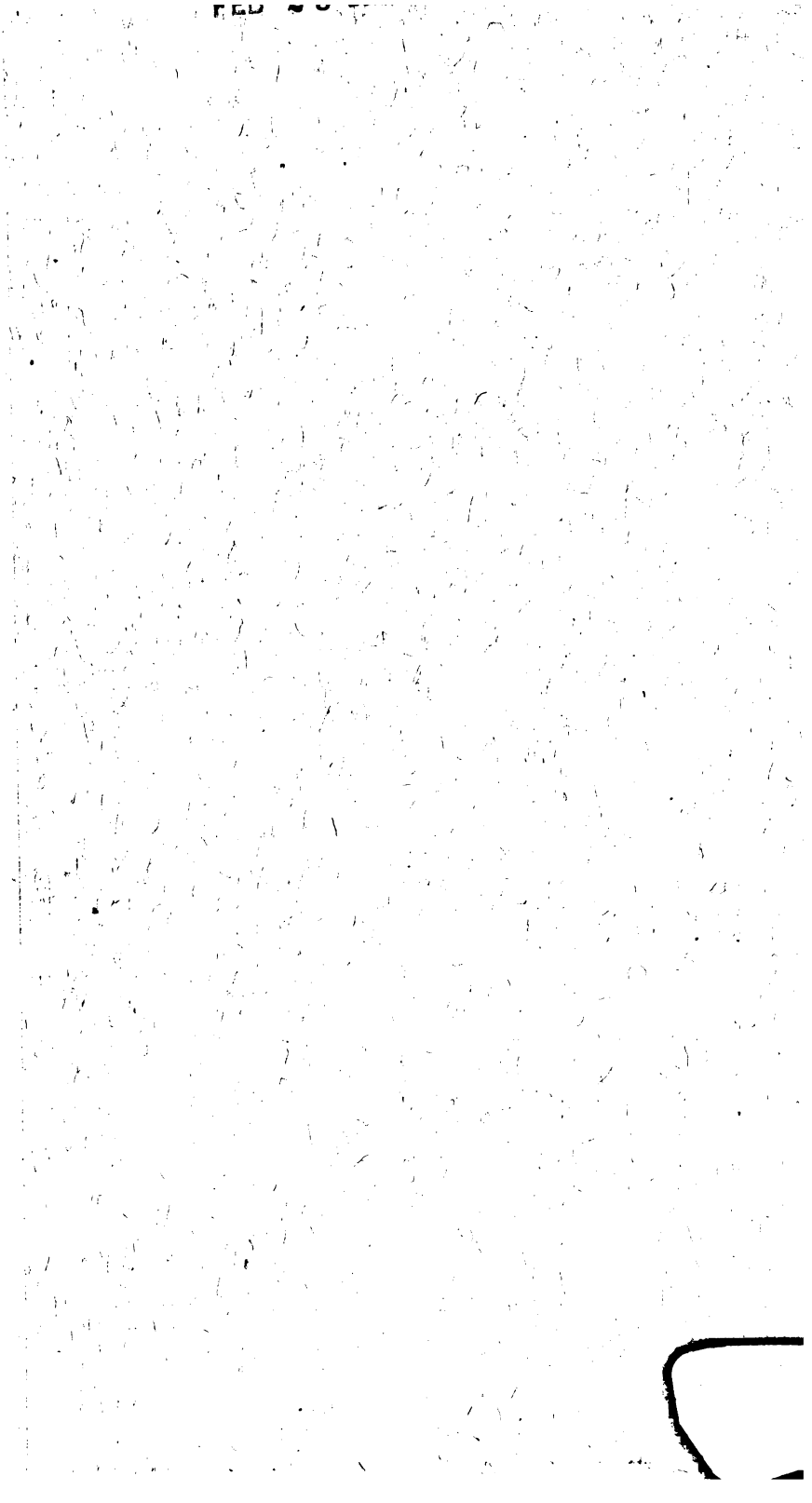
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